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ABSTRACT

This research project seeks to implement journaling as a means of improving oral communication in the classroom. The student population will consist of an elementary reading class, a junior high art class, and a high school math class. The probable cause literature gathered revealed a lack oral communication occurs in the classroom during discussions, because of low self-esteem, fear of rejection, anxiety, shyness, reticence and peer pressure. Solution strategies recommended by notable literature will result in the implementation of weekly journaling. The weekly integration of journaling that will be done at the three different grade levels will be introduced at the beginning of the school year, and continue through the intervention process. Post-intervention data indicated only a slight improvement in oral communication in the classroom. The researchers, however, did feel that the element of trust was enhanced through the journaling process, and that made for a better climate in the classroom. Appendixes contain a parent letter; pre- and post-student survey; teacher observation checklist; a teacher communication survey; blank journal forms and templates; and online journal templates. (Contains 39 references, 3 tables, and 27 figures.) (Author/RS)

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CS CSTR 0114

THE EFFECTS OF JOURNALING ON ORAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

ED 480 256

Michele Grbavac
Christopher Piggott
Mark Rougeux

An Action Research Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight Professional Development

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 2003

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The probable cause literature gathered revealed a lack oral communication occurs in the classroom during discussions, because of low self-esteem, fear of rejection, anxiety, shyness, reticence and peer pressure.

Solution strategies recommended by notable literature will result in the implementation of weekly journaling. The weekly integration of journaling that will be done at the three different grade levels will be introduced at the beginning of the school year, and continue through the intervention process.

Post-intervention data indicated only a slight improvement in oral communication in the classroom. The researchers, however, did feel that the element of trust was enhanced through the journaling process, and that made for a better climate in the classroom.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Advisor

Advisor

Dean, School of Education

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Students at all ages go through periods of comparing themselves with others, realizing that they are not as talented, smart, athletic, etc. This time is quite taxing to their self-esteem. Not only are they subject to their own scrutiny, but they fall prey to the scrutiny of their peers. The purpose of this study was to help students gain an awareness of what they were experiencing, both personally and academically, and potentially increase oral communication during class discussions and instruction. The main tool for this realization was a self-reflective journal. The targeted students were those enrolled in the subjects of elementary school reading (Site A), middle school art (Site B), and high school math (Site C). A self-esteem pretest was administered to the students in the respective classes at the beginning of the study to determine the existence of the problem.

Immediate Problem Context

The three sites involved in this action research were in three very different types of settings, which could affect student classroom communication. Students from each school had available a myriad of programs that effected a healthy self-esteem. The availability of these programs varied dramatically from school to school. The grade levels involved were of great importance to this study, because the age of the students involved ranged from those in 6^{th} grade to those in 12^{th} grade. Table 1 illustrates a comparison of these sites.

Table 1
Project School Site Demographics

GENERAL	Site A	Site B	Site C
Students/School			
Location	Western Suburbs	Western Suburbs	Northwest Suburbs
District Type	Public Elementary	Public Junior High	Public Senior High
Grades Enrolled	K-6	7-8	9-12
Enrollment	714	683	2,703
Mobility	20.4%	6.6%	7.9%
Attendance	96.1%	96.2%	94.6%
Low Income	22.7%	6.4%	2.9%
Limited English Proficiency	29.1%	5.6%	4.0%
Chronic Truancy	0.3%	0.1%	0.6%
Racial-Ethnic Background			
White	28.0%	66.5%	80.9%
Black	2.7%	6.7%	2.8%
Hispanic	66.4%	9.2%	3.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.9%	17.4%	12.5%
Native American	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Instructional Setting			
Average Class Size	30	19.9	22.6
Contact With Parents	100.0%	97%	84.3%
Daily Instructional Minutes			
Mathematics	42	43	N/A
Science	29	43	N/A
English	175	86	N/A
Social Science	29	43	N/A
Special Services			
Gifted Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Education Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
ESL Program	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff/School			
Principal	1	1	1
Other Administrators	1	1	7
Teachers	50	49	179
Counselors	0	1	10
Speech Pathologists	1	1	1
Psychologists	0	1	2
Social Workers	1	1	3
Nurses	1	1	1
Support Staff	16	24	133

(Source: School Report Card, 2001.)

Site A was located in a western suburb of a large Midwestern city. The structure was a single-story building, laid out in the shape of an E. Kindergarten through 6th grade occupied the

building. There was a computer area in the library with office-style cubicle walls reaching partway to the ceiling. There was one full-time librarian, who carried out library duties as well as duties of a computer and media technical instructor. A few years ago, because of a multimillion-dollar settlement by the core city and an international airport, the school underwent a massive renovation for soundproofing. This included the installation of schoolwide air conditioning and full Internet access in all the classrooms and offices.

Site B was located in a western suburb of the main city. The building was a one-story square-shaped school that was reopened seven years prior to this study. The building consisted of a three-secretary office, two administrators, one social worker, a school psychologist, a counselor, a nurse, a police officer, 49 teachers, 31 classrooms, a gym, a lunchroom, an activity room, and one computer lab.

Site C was a large public high school located approximately 30 miles northwest of a large midwestern city. The school was a large two-story building built in 1961. There were eight computer labs, an auditorium, a natatorium, six gyms, and more than 60 classrooms. There were 14 departments and more than 300 faculty, support staff, and administrators.

School Districts

Site A comprised three elementary schools, one middle school, and a special-education site adjacent to the administration center. The district was largely made up of Hispanic students, with a steady student-body increase anticipated. Many of the students came directly from Mexico, where they may or may not have attended school and most did not speak proficient English. The school had bilingual classes in only kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades. In subsequent

years, English as a second language (ESL) tutoring was available for approximately 45 minutes a week, except in a few extreme cases when they received more.

It should be noted that the district was in a state of flux. During the previous school year, the superintendent died of a heart attack. A new superintendent was in place for the first time in many years, and adjustments were being made. Because of a failed levy, field trips had been suspended during the time of this study. They may be permitted in subsequent years if this year's levy passes. Normally, there are two field trips a year per grade. The 6th graders usually went to a major newspaper to see the automated process of newspaper production, and a world-renowned science and industry museum. Additionally, the normal complement of after-school activities had been reduced to clubs having at least 20 students, each paying a fee of $30. Only one club survived the fiscal dilemma – after-school gym.

There was one social worker, who was on site three days a week. The school was serviced by a township social services office, headed by a psychologist. There were no guidance counselors at this level in the district.

The school had two gymnasiums with two full-time physical education teachers, one full-time music teacher, and an art teacher. It should be noted that the music program was thriving, almost entirely funded by student fees. Students took private music lessons and performed at various functions at school and in the community, depending on their level of proficiency.

The middle school had a natatorium, in which all students from grades 3 to 8 took swimming lessons for two weeks each year as part of their regular school day. They received Red Cross training and certificates for their accomplishments.

Site A had a very active Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), which offered the students many opportunities to interact with the community in which they lived. They sponsored a guest

speaker series, inviting actors who portrayed notable people in history. They also provided special events throughout the year, such as writing contests, art contests, book swaps, and holiday parties.

The long-standing Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program had recently been dropped by the district because it was deemed ineffective. For the 6th graders, a program that focuses on gang awareness and drug abuse is attended each year.

Site B offered many programs that directly related to writing and self-esteem, which was the focus of this investigation. The Character Counts program was an integral part of the daily lives of the students, faculty and staff. The School Improvement Plan focused on strengthening reading and writing across the curriculum. The school had just started a student recognition committee. It also offered numerous student clubs and activities, such as theatrical productions, student council, band, orchestra, a student publication, cheerleading squad, pompon squad, a mentoring program, sports teams, peer mediation program, academic recovery, ESL, and volunteer student tutoring. Students could also elect to take several course selections that could possibly strengthen their self-esteem. These included visual art, life skills, technology, Spanish, French, music, careers and drama. Students were encouraged to enter competitions outside of the school, which many teachers incorporated into their curriculum.

Site C was a nationally recognized high school and was named among the nation's "Top 99 High Schools" by *U.S. News & World Report*. It was a competitive, comprehensive four-year high school from which more than 95% of the students went on to two- or four-year institutions of higher learning. There were many opportunities for the student body including over 15 advanced placement (AP) courses, over 50 co-curricular organizations, and 28 interscholastic athletic teams. The school grading system consisted of A, A-, B+, etc., which allowed for a more

accurate means of reporting the students' achievements in the classroom. The school provided many student-assistant programs, three social workers, two school psychologists, 10 counselors, a peer mediation group, and a college counseling office to assist students who wanted to further their education. According to the school improvement plan, some goals of the school were to improve the students' reading comprehension and technology skills across the curriculum. A character program has been implemented and "Pride" awards are given to recognize students who demonstrate outstanding achievement and character in the classroom.

Table 2 provides detailed information comparing all three districts.

Table 2
Three-Site Comparison District Data

SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA	Site A	Site B	Site C
District Type	Public Elementary	Pubic Junior High	Public High School
Geographic Region	Western Suburbs	Western Suburbs	Northwest Suburbs
Enrollment	714	15,805	12,569
Total Number of Teachers	190	997	746
Teacher Racial/Ethnic Background			
White	90.0%	96.9%	93.8%
Black	0.0%	0.6%	1.5%
Hispanic	9.5%	1.2%	2.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.5%	1.2%	2.5%
Native American	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Teacher Gender			
Male	16.3%	13.1%	51.3%
Female	83.7%	86.9%	48.7%
Teacher/Administrator Characteristics			
Average Teacher Experience	13.8	17.9	17.8
Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	57.0%	42.5%	18.7%
Teachers with Master's Degree & Above	43.0%	57.5%	80.1%
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	18.1	19	19.4
Pupil-Certified Staff Ratio	13.4	13.8	14.3
Pupil-Administrator Ratio	282.9	270.2	246.8
Average Teacher Salary	$46,682	$56,029	$82,882
Average Administrator Salary	$98,655	$86,412	$114,973
School District Finances			
Instructional Expenditure per Pupil	$5,812	$4,863	$6,918
Operating Expenditure per Pupil	$8,567	$8,320	$11,847

(Source: School Report Card, 2001.)

The Surrounding Community

The three sites involved in this action research came from three distinctly different communities, both financially and ethnically. Site A consisted of three communities, Site B had two, and Site C had seven. Data are included in Table 3.

Site A was served by three communities in a medium-size western suburb of a large midwestern metropolitan city. The population had changed over the past few decades, from largely Italian-American to one of a very diverse nature. The Hispanic population was the fastest-growing group, emigrating from varying parts of Mexico, most recently the Durango area. The homes were mostly made up of old wood-frame two-flats and classic brick-faced bungalows. There were many small markets, restaurants, and taverns. There were also several hotels offering low-income housing to a growing transient population.

Site A's proximity to an international airport, major interstate highways, and a railroad yard made its main thoroughfare one of the busiest in the area. However, being so close to the airport, the businesses along that road were used mainly by the immediate community and bypassed by those using the airport facilities. Many major businesses operate in Site A's communities.

Because the district's academic scores were among the lowest in the state and the township's high school's scores were in the state's median range, it was difficult for the communities to attract new, more upscale, white-collar families who worked in the city, although there was adequate public transportation into the city.

Site A also offered several parks, including a water park, for summer use. The middle school's natatorium was a community source as well. One of the goals of the community leaders

was to invest in more student-friendly areas, so children of all ages would have many outlets to become involved in healthy play on a year-'round basis.

Site B was served by two communities in a large western suburb. The community was very commercial, because it was close to one of the largest malls in the United States. It was considered a great area in which to live for the shopping, good schools, nice residential streets, close access to the major highways, public transportation, and one of the largest international airports in the country. The community provided many opportunities for students to display their work with their many partnerships with local businesses, support of libraries, fine arts center, and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

Site C was in the largest school district in the state, and served 11 communities within a 62-mile boundary. There was access to a major north-south highway and a major east-west highway, Amtrak, and a public transportation system. The community was largely commercial because it was located near one of the biggest shopping malls in the United States. Over 82% of the teachers held their master's degree or beyond. In 2001, there were 24 National Merit Scholars. The district had the largest school bus fleet and provides transportation for nearly 9,000 students a day. It was the only known school district to have all of its mechanics nationally certified. The district also provided extensive services for its EMH students. A work-study program enabled students to receive training outside of school in service-related industries, which provided them with invaluable work experience.

Table 3
Project Community Demographics by Township

COMMUNITY DATA	Site A	Site B	Site C
Population	94,648	134,114	112,740
Racial-Ethnic Background [1]			
White	84.6%	77.6%	84.8%
Black	1.4%	4.0%	2.4%
Hispanic	22.7%	8.5%	11.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	13.3%	9.1%
Other	8.3%	3.0%	4.9%
Demographics			
Median Family Income	$42,900	$69,049	$67,414
Education - HS or Higher	33.7%	90.5%	90.5%
Median Age	32.9	35.3	35.0
Household Income Below	5.5%	4.2%	3.6%
Housing			
Median Home Value	$157,000	$215,000	$210.100
Single-Family Units	67.5%	65.2%	68.4%
Multi-Family Units	32.5%	34.8%	31.6%
Median Gross Rent	$525	$900	$889
Number of Households	35,660	52,253	43,858

[1] In combination with one or more of the other races listed, the numbers may add to more than the total population. The percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.)

National Context of the Problem

Erikson's and Harte's studies (as cited by Plucker, 2001) reveal insight into the concept of self. "Among the affective constructs that have been targeted as important to adolescent well-being, few have received greater attention than self-concept." "During adolescence, the self-concept becomes more abstract and differentiated, enabling complex forms of self-representation to take shape." Journaling can help benefit the self-concept by enhancing personal growth, personal development, intuition, self-expression, problem solving, stress reduction, health benefits, reflection and critical thinking (Hiemstra, 2001). In Moon's study (as cited by Boud 2001), two purposes for writing journals were, "to enable learners to understand their own learning process," and "to enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment."

"In learning terms, the journal is both the place where the events and experiences are recorded and the forum by which they are processed and re-formed. This working with events is intended as a way to make sense of the experiences that result, recognize the learning that results, and build a foundation for new experiences that will provoke new learning" (Boud, 2001).

At the time of this study, students found themselves being surrounded by a plethora of pressures, inclusive of self-imposed, peer, family expectations and societal. The discovery process through reflective self-evaluation has become the topic of research among professional educators. There seems to be a paradigm shift that would allow students to become more in tune with their own feelings and more active in their own education (Baxter, 2001). "Their self-esteem will benefit as they learn that success in mathematics can be achieved through their own unique and varied thought processes" (Baxter, 2001).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Student surveys were the main tools used in documenting the extent to which journaling in the classroom may increase reluctant sixth- through ninth-grade students to more frequently contribute orally (Appendix B). The student self-evaluation survey provided documentation on how they saw themselves communicating with various audiences. Data collected regarding the students' frequency of oral classroom participation were included in a teacher journal. All data regarding the evidence of the problem were collected between August 26 and September 13, 2002.

The following data were organized by common themes. In each of the three grade levels, class participation was analyzed on the basis of answer certainty, peer pressure/self-esteem, and oral communication outside the classroom.

Since the years between 6th through 9th grade give rise to so many physical and emotional changes in students, it was decided to keep each grade level separate while studying student responses. The sophistication level of students between the ages of 11 and 15 varies significantly. Students approach their ideology very differently during early adolescence than they do midway through this developmental stage. At the earlier stages of this period, students tend to base many responses to questions on peer pressure based on parental influence, while exerting their independence in the later stages (Allison & Schultz, 2001).

As shown in Figure 1, data generated from the students of Site A suggest that 86% of the 6th grade students surveyed based their willingness to ask for help during class on whether they were certain of an answer. Of those surveyed, approximately 87% felt that some type of shyness played a significant part in their willingness to participate.

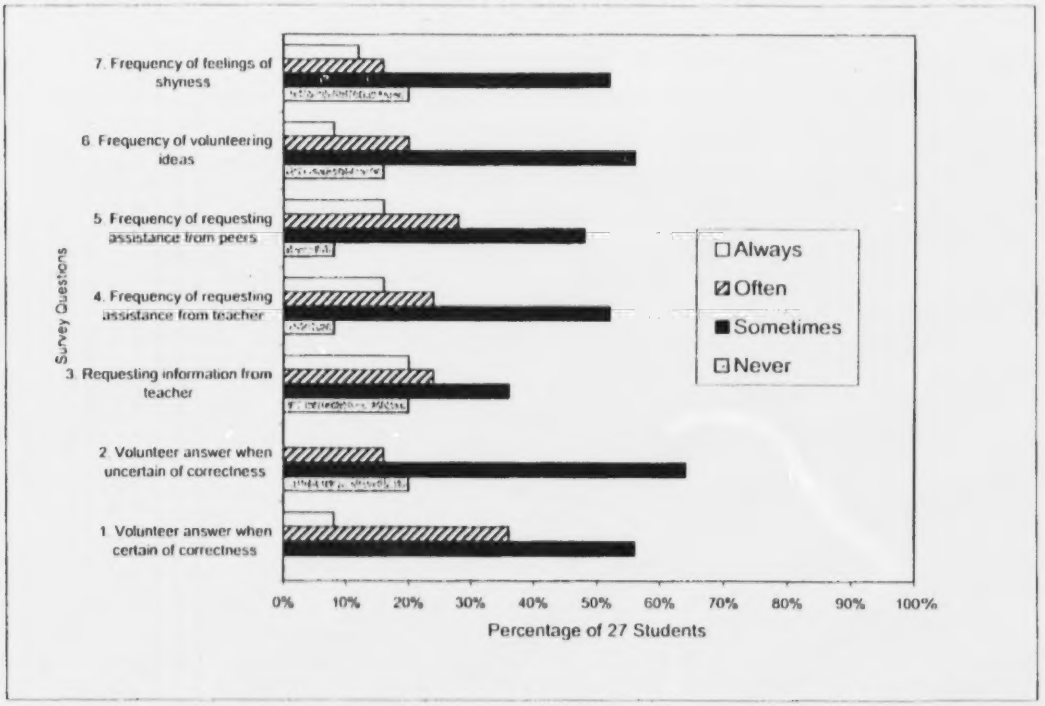

Figure 1. Class Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 6th Grade Students.

In Figure 2, the data generated from Site B suggest that approximately 89% of the 8th grade students surveyed based their willingness to ask for help during class on whether they were certain of an answer. Of those surveyed, approximately 75% felt that some type of shyness played a significant part in their willingness to participate.

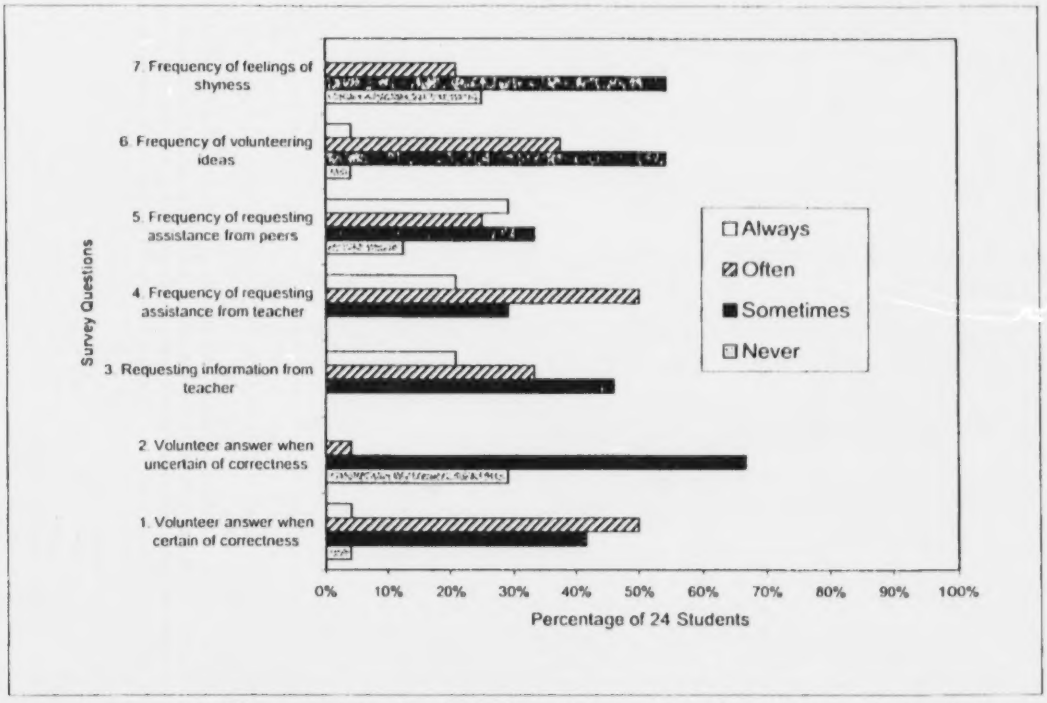

Figure 2. Class Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 8th Grade Students.

In Figure 3, the data generated from Site C suggest that approximately 82% of the 9th grade students surveyed based their willingness to ask for help during class on whether they were certain of an answer. Of those surveyed, approximately 68% felt that some type of shyness played a significant part in their willingness to participate.

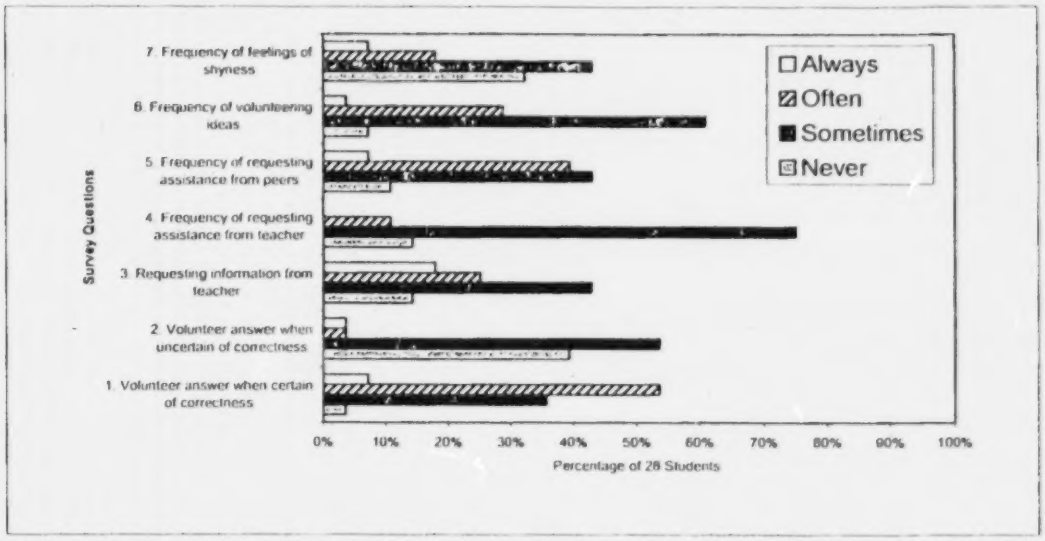

Figure 3. Class Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 9th Grade Students.

Students from Site A were surveyed regarding their class participation based on peer pressure and self-esteem. As seen in Figure 4, question number 12 indicates that 92% of the students felt that what they had to offer during a class discussion was valuable, but when question 8 is examined, 68% felt that they were, at times, afraid to answer during class because they may disagree with their peers. With regard to fear of possibly disagreeing with the teacher during a class discussion, 68% again said they were afraid to participate at times.

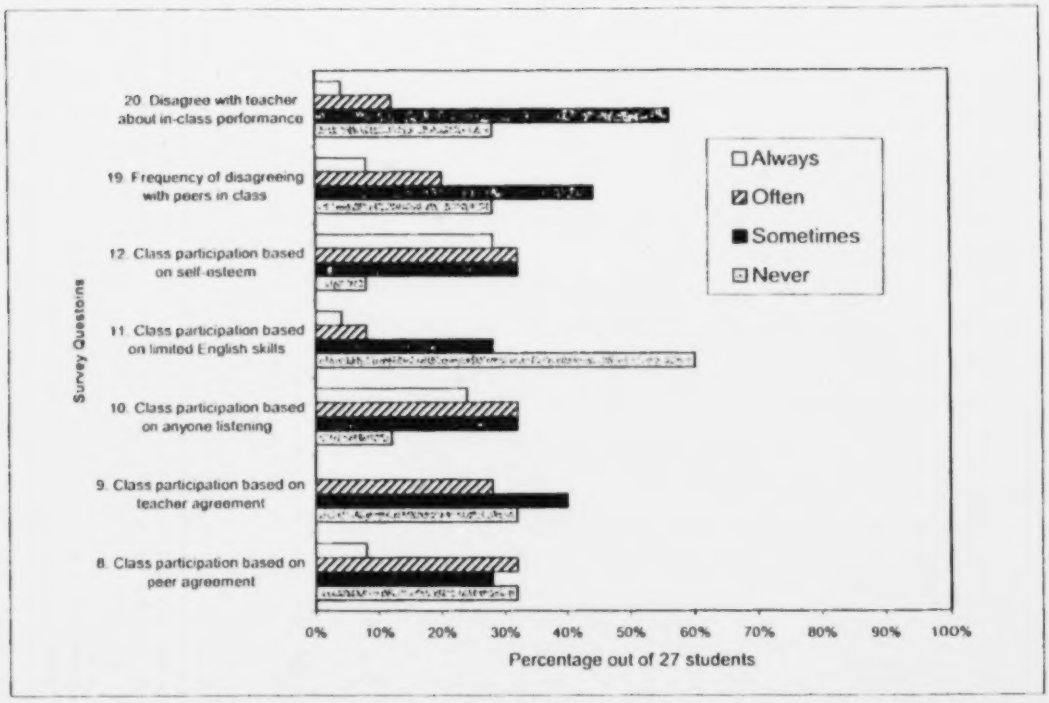

Figure 4. Class Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 6th Grade Students.

The students from Site B were surveyed regarding their class participation based on peer pressure and self-esteem. As seen in Figure 5, question number 12 indicates that 83% of the students felt that what they had to offer during a class discussion was valuable. When question 8 is examined, 74% felt that they were, at times, afraid to answer during class because they may disagree with their peers. With regard to fear of possibly disagreeing with the teacher during a class discussion, 83% said they were afraid to participate at times.

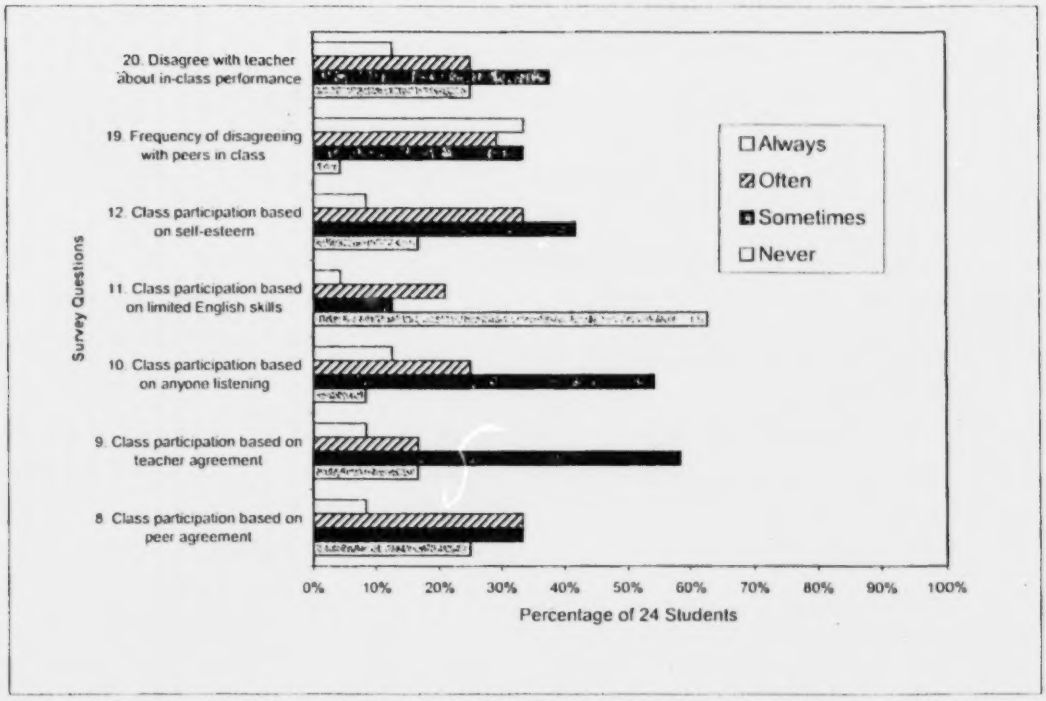

Figure 5: Class Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 8th Grade Students.

The students from Site C were surveyed regarding their class participation based on peer pressure and self-esteem. As seen in Figure 6, question number 12 indicates that 90% of the students felt that what they had to offer during a class discussion was valuable. When question 8 is examined, 46% felt that they were, at times, afraid to answer during class because they may disagree with their peers. Unlike the younger students, the 9th-grade students think less of what their peer group (54%) and teachers (54%) think when they feel they need to disagree during a class discussion.

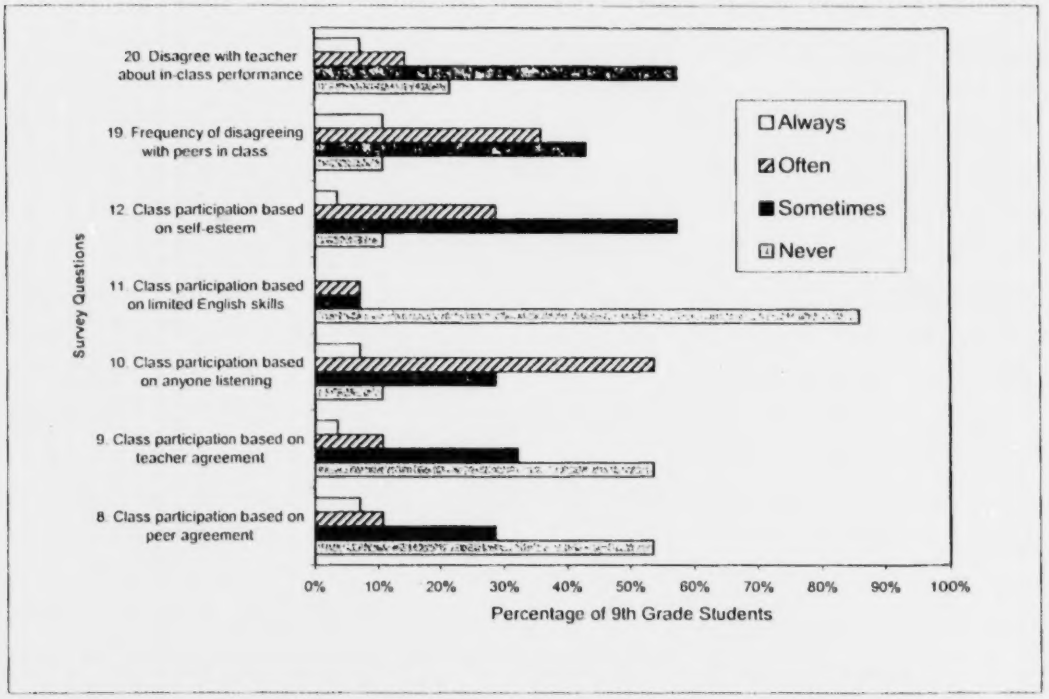

Figure 6: Class Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 9th Grade Students.

After examining Figures 1 through 6, it can be seen that there are concerns on the part of the students when either answering in class or requesting assistance from a teacher or peer, and when disagreeing with either a teacher or a peer during a discussion. All these factors combined may contribute to reluctance on the part of the students to participate as much as they should to gain as much as possible from their classroom experience.

In Figure 7, the data collected for Site A measured how much oral communication was available outside of school, which included friends, parents, and relatives. In this data set, 88% of the students had the opportunity to talk outside of school with a member of their family or with friends about their schoolwork. Measuring how comfortable the

students felt discussing a school project with their families or peers, 92% answered in the affirmative to some degree. It should also be noted that 92% of the students have a chance to sit down and talk with a parent or peers about class projects. These data sets seem to suggest that the students feel greater comfort when talking to their parents and peers in an out-of-school setting as opposed to the previous data in Figures 1 through 6, in which they exhibited more fear about rejection from their peer groups and the teacher. It would seem that the classroom setting itself may be the catalyst that prevents the students from engaging in open communication.

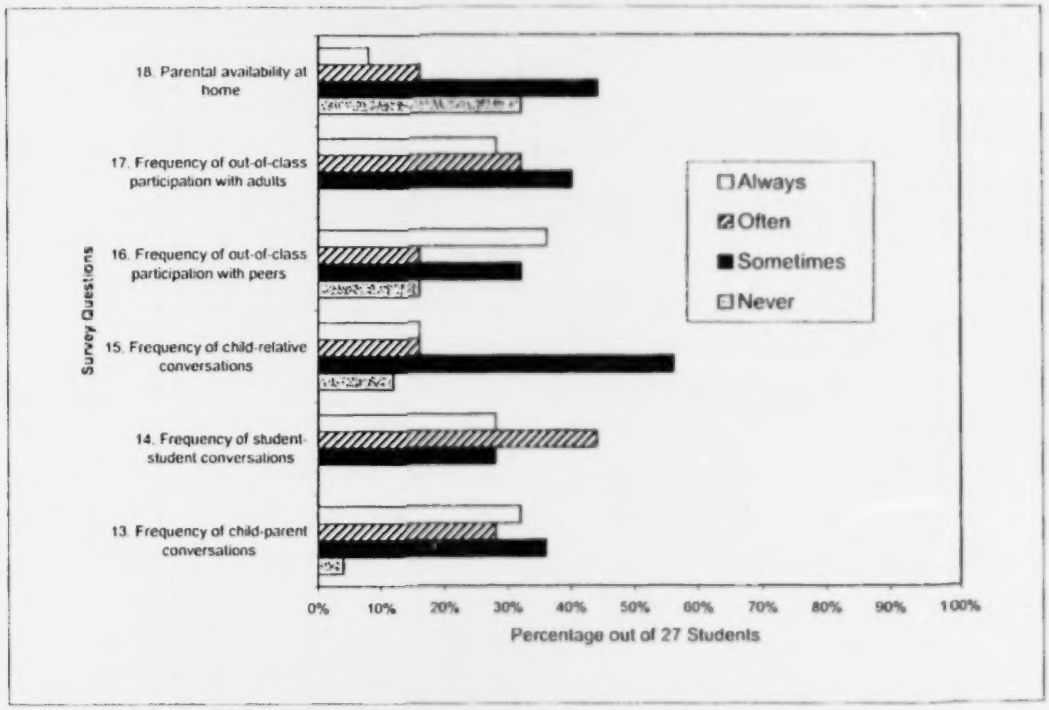

Figure 7. Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 6th Grade Students.

In Figure 8, the data collected for Site B measured how much oral communication was available outside of school, which included friends, parents, and relatives. In this data set, 82% of the students had the opportunity to talk outside of school with a member of their

family or with friends about their schoolwork. Measuring how comfortable the students felt discussing a school project with their families or peers, 87% answered in the affirmative to some degree. It should also be noted that 88% of the students have a chance to sit down and talk with a parent or peers about class projects. These data indicate that students who are one to two years older than those in Site A spend less time talking about what they are doing in school with their parents, relatives, and peers. That analysis, combined with the data presented in Figures 1 through 6, would suggest that they feel more confident and more independent.

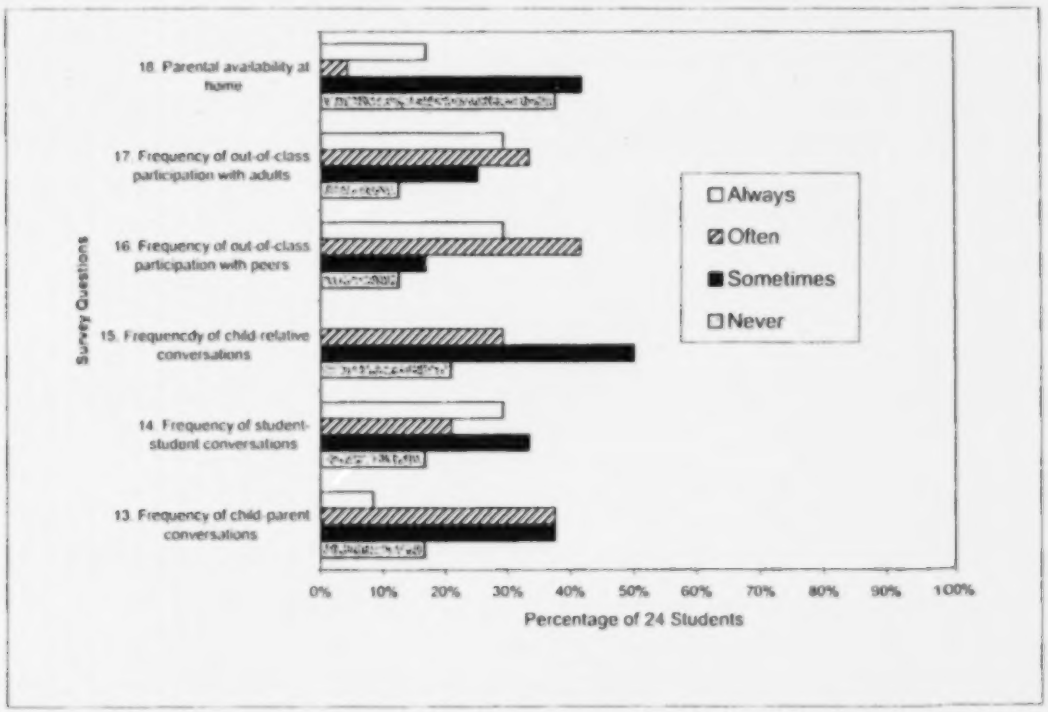

Figure 8. Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 8th Grade Students.

In Figure 9, the data collected for Site C measured how much oral communication was available outside of school, which included friends, parents, and relatives. In this data set, 97% of the students had the opportunity to talk outside of school with a member of their

family or with friends about their schoolwork. Measuring how comfortable the students felt discussing a school project with their families or peers, 99% answered in the affirmative to some degree. It should also be noted that 91% of the students have a chance to sit down and talk with a parent or peers about class projects. The data suggest that students at this site are more comfortable and have more time available to engage in open communication with family members and peers than those in Sites A and B. Paired with data generated in Figures 3 and 6, there is an indication that the students are also more comfortable in the classroom setting.

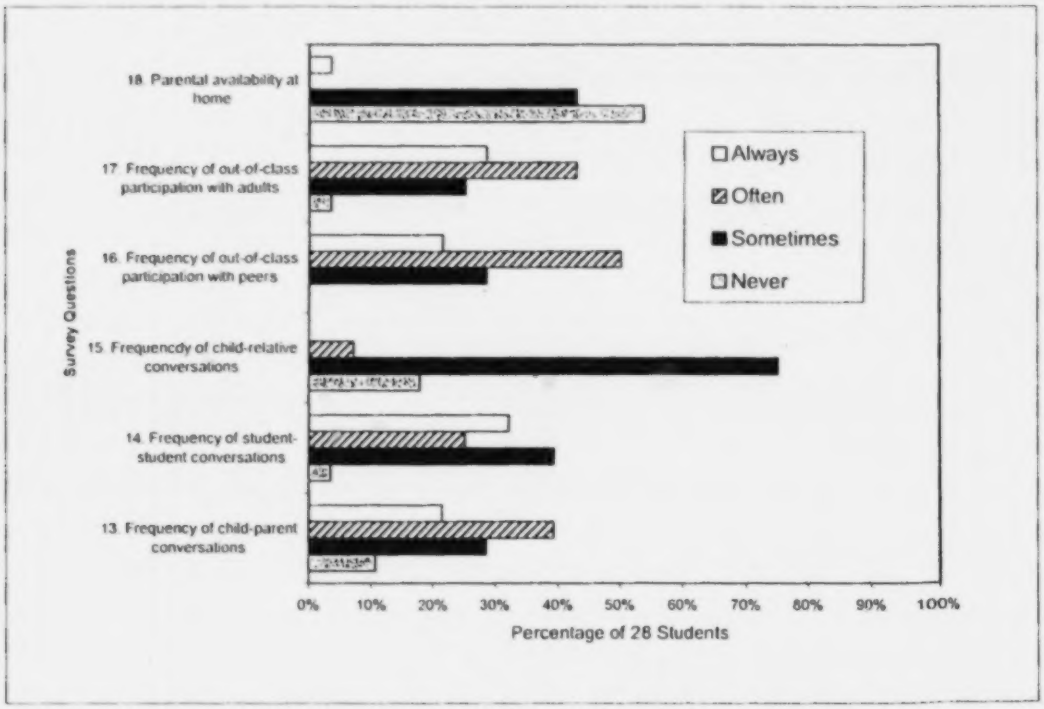

Figure 9. Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 9th Grade Students

A faculty survey was administered (Appendix D), but it did not reveal data that was useable because the teachers did not perceive the students' feelings as well as the student survey. Also, an observation checklist (Appendix C) was created to record the

frequency with which students responded in class. It was abandoned because it was too difficult to tally.

Probable Causes

Probable causes of students' lack of enthusiasm about contributing to class discussions stem from a variety of sources. These sources include negative peer pressure, low self-esteem, lack of communication skills, rejection, shyness, and reticence.

Professional literature suggests that students who succumb to negative peer pressure often find themselves silenced in class, whether or not they have something to contribute (Petress, 2001). One of the more serious forms of negative peer pressure manifests itself in the guise of bullying. Students may remain silent during their years in school because they are afraid of how they will be perceived by their peers, and the bullying that could follow as a result of positive attention from a teacher. Bullying negatively affects the environment of the school. Victims experience an inability to learn, fear of attending school, fear of social situations, loss of self-esteem, and loneliness (Ericson, 2001). Succumbing to the terrors of bullying can render children speechless in a classroom setting, denying them the holistic dynamics of the educational process. Students may become depressed and withdrawn to the point at which they discontinue a positive scholastic effort. Bullying victims demonstrate a variety of psychosocial difficulties, including low self-esteem, low self-confidence, anxiety, nervousness at school, and have feelings of unpopularity (Duncan, 1999).

When children have no drive left to learn, and their defenses against bullying and other peer pressures have been depleted, grades begin to drop and school attendance begins to suffer to the point at which victims of bullying frequently drop out of school

(Khosropour, 2001). Other than the aforementioned effects of peer pressure, it is also evident in research that peer pressure, popularity, peer conformity, and general conformity are related to misconduct. Students may begin to align themselves with the norms of the bullying mindset as a means to fit into an accepted peer group. When the students conform to these norms, the group begins to practice more precarious behavior (Messervey & Santor, 2000).

Researchers have long understood that self-esteem is a major component in how people react to social stimuli. With adolescents being the target group for this study, it has been found that students in this age group become very confused and concerned about how they are perceived by their peers. Unfortunately, self-esteem and self-concept become very complex and easily abstracted. Students do not understand what they are feeling and have a difficult time decoding the clues that have been presented by others in the same peer group (Plucker, 2001).

Because the students in this age group find themselves confused about conflicting self-esteem issues, they often find themselves at odds with their own classmates, the very people from whom they seek validation. Children who have low self-esteem tend to have a difficult time formulating solutions to everyday problems, whereas children with more positive self-esteem tend to function more easily in a peer-group setting (Rutherford, 2001).

Students' fears of being rejected by their peers is extremely damaging, but those same fears, when coupled with the fears of continued failure in front of the teacher, may cause a heightened sense of anxiety and ultimately an inability to perform. The fear of evaluation and rejection, especially from a teacher – someone the students have been

taught to trust – is especially devastating to children's participation in the classroom setting (Brophy, 1996).

Researchers have found that shyness is another factor in lack of communication. It is a condition that can plague people from birth. It is natural to be shy to a certain extent when trying something new, or when greeting a large number of strangers, but this type of shyness usually goes away with maturity and some practice of social skills. Some children, however, suffer this type of shyness for the rest of their lives (Rutherford, 2002). If shyness does not begin to dissipate with age, it may begin to overcome the personality, and the people who suffer from it may be rendered socially dysfunctional and unable to join group discussions and/or activities (Malouff, 1998).

Another probable cause of lack of oral communication in the classroom is reticence. Adopting reticence as a classroom demeanor is a choice. Students do it willingly because they actually feel that people talk too much in public. They believe it is better to be quiet rather than be thought of in the negative, and they may begin to fear public speaking (Keaten, 2000). When this is coupled with feelings of rejection, reticent people may have idiosyncrasies toward evaluation and a heightened sensitivity to the opinions of others (Keaten, 2000).

Children who go home to empty houses have a great deal of time alone. They have no adult family member with whom to discuss what they did in school, be it good or bad. Often their parents are not physically available, or choose not to be emotionally available to their children through conversation, because of work schedules and fatigue. Students tend to lack conversational skills because their parents tend not to respond or initiate discussions (Brophy, 1996).

CHAPTER 3

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

As indicated in Chapter 2, students who are not comfortable with themselves and their place in society, specifically the classroom, will tend not to engage in open dialogue inside the classroom. To that end this project is focusing on means of enabling students to develop a better understanding of their place in the classroom, as well as the importance of their ability to orally participate.

As a possible solution, modifying the classroom setting has shown promising results. A classroom's physical arrangement can address multiple needs of students (Garcia, 1998). Creating an open-classroom environment allows students to freely communicate their thoughts through oral language. Students acquire a sense of belonging and feel they have power and freedom of choice. (Capraro & David, 2001).

Another consideration is to modify instruction and create a more nurturing environment in terms of how the teacher addresses the students during class time. When teachers ask carefully constructed questions before, during, and after a lesson, students are more motivated to interact with the teacher and other students. This type of questioning presents the students with a model of how to interact with others in an academic environment. Most students will respond to this method of interaction and find they are beginning to develop their higher-order thinking skills.

It is important that the teachers be open-minded to a student's response to a question or issue. In the classroom setting, this open-mindedness, and nonjudgmental attitude, will enable the student to offer oral responses. Simply praising a child's efforts and engaging in a more meaningful conversation with a child in the classroom will strengthen the willingness to ask questions, or offer answers (Chuska, 1995).

Modeling appropriate classroom communication is a strategy that teachers have been employing for decades. Students emulate those who assist in their maturation. They learn a great deal by observing the actions of parents and other adults. To have students communicate openly in the classroom, teachers must model those same communication skills (Malouff, 1998).

Student-based criteria development and assessment are other solutions that many teachers are beginning to use to make the teaching environment more conducive to aiding students become more vocal participants. Teachers who involve students in both setting objectives and participating in assessment see an increase in student communication. On the basis of this experience, students have more meaningful classroom conversations (Davies, 2001).

Developing students' physical and oral participation in a cooperative setting helps them realize that working in groups requires vocal participation to organize a social structure that will benefit the group as a whole. This structure would involve students in developing classroom rules and expectations, as well as having a voice in other matters within the classroom. Research supports that grouping students cooperatively tends to open different avenues for group discussions. Becoming comfortable in a small group setting often transfers to a larger group, and real life settings (Kagan, 2001).

During the process of teaching cooperative learning, students will realize that their social interdependence must have at its core open communication among all members in a small group. This may be difficult for some, but the need to work together to achieve a common goal will strongly encourage all the members of a cooperative group to be active participants (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

Glasser states that people are motivated only by what will satisfy them at one particular moment. Teachers need to find other methods, aside from external rewards and punishments, and begin using methods that will encourage intrinsic rewards, thereby helping students receive satisfaction from a lesson on a personal level (Glasser, 1986).

Continuing studies on the control theory (Glasser, 1986), coupled with his choice theory (Glasser, 1998), suggest that acquiring a balance of the five needs of survival – love, belonging, power, freedom, and fun – is very difficult. Some students may achieve academically, fulfilling their need for power and, to some extent, freedom. They will, however, focus so heavily on those two needs that the others go unsatisfied. One of the unsatisfied needs may be for social acceptance. It is possible for some students to ignore the need to belong while focusing on the need of freedom of choice, especially if there is a heavy emphasis by a student's peers or by the school to achieve a higher degree of success at any cost. To maintain a balance, educators must find ways to satisfy students' sense of intrinsic rewards. Participating in class discussions will not occur while a child believes he does not fit in socially or belong to the rest of the group. Finding ways to incorporate the control theory in the classroom and to maintain a balance of the five essential needs of the students will aid in helping students participate in class discussions, because they will enjoy a well-rounded view of their own needs (Roberson, 1999).

The bulk of reviewed literature suggests journaling as a means to prepare students for orally communicating in class. Journaling helps students organize their thoughts on paper before they need to use them in conversation. Through writing that focuses on their own thinking processes, the students are becoming more aware of strategies that help them become better communicators (Golub & Reid, 1999). The driving purpose of journaling is that it advances students' thoughts and communicative skills (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994). While students are engaged in the writing process involved in journaling, they will find that it becomes a natural avenue to take their thoughts from the written form into the classroom in the form of oral communication. Their dialogue in a journal allows them to think about their ideas, and perhaps modify them, before trying them out orally in the classroom (Hughes, Kooy, 1997). When students write regularly in their journals, they begin to increase their writing fluency, tend to acquire and develop their own voice, and become more confident (Brodine, Isaacs, 1994).

Metacognitive reflections through journaling give students an outlet to analyze their own methods of thinking. These reflections lead to transferring knowledge to other similar situations. Journaling gives students insight into their own thought processes and enables them to transfer that information to real life situations (Burke, 1999). In reflecting on their own thinking processes, students will become adept at recognizing the importance of self-exploration, questioning, and connecting. When this reflection is in written form, students have a source of dialogue prepared for use during class discussions or when asking questions (Golub, Reid, 1999).

Students sense a teacher's sincerity after a time while engaging in dialogue journaling. This sincerity gives some students the encouragement they need to look

beyond possible in-class chastisement, and begin to orally communicate during classroom instruction (Harper, Knudsen & Wagner 2000). Dialogue journaling allows a very private discourse between student and teacher, eliminating the possibility of rejection, and encouraging the freedom of sharing one's thoughts (Meel, 1999).

Some students may have what they deem issues that are too sensitive to talk about in the classroom setting. Students may not want other students to know what they are thinking, but still they have questions. In this situation, students are able to dialogue with their teachers through journaling, and know they will receive an answer, or encouragement, thus reinforcing the trust that is needed for them to begin the communicative process with their teachers (Harper, Knudsen & Wagner, 2000).

Reflection, especially in journal form, is a combination of observation and memory. There is a deeper sense of comprehension on the part of the student. Because it is an active process, the students have an increased sense of ownership of their thoughts and become more comfortable orally sharing those thoughts in the classroom (Smith, 1997).

As a method of communication, writing provides avenues for students to share their ideas and reflections in an environment of unconditional acceptance (Chuska, 1995). Students may not feel that the teacher can be trusted on occasion, especially with early primary students who are not accustomed to an authority figure other than their parents. Opening up an avenue of discussion will provide the student the opportunity to become a more productive member of the class and a more independent learner (Garcia, 1998). Unless students are comfortable with the acceptance of their responses, they will not offer

an answer. Putting their thoughts down first in written form allows them to carefully choose the words they may use in classroom conversation (Chuska, 1995).

In journaling, students have a choice as to what they will reveal to their teachers. Allowing them to choose their writing topic encourages them to become actively involved in their writing (Swartzendruber-Putnam, 2000).

It is impossible to reach each student and engage in a meaningful conversation that may unlock why they will not openly share their ideas orally in the classroom. Journaling can be suggested if there seem to be interruptions in a child's willingness to participate in class. Sometimes journaling will help reveal the student's own inabilities to cope with the other members of the classroom or influences outside the classroom (Garcia, 1998). In classrooms with a large population, dialogue journaling is a good way to carry on conversations with several students at the same time and still remain private. This is very instrumental in aiding teachers to learn what difficulties the students may be having (Garcia, 1998).

During the journaling process, students tend to become less inhibited while expressing their thoughts and ideas (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994). Giving the students a forum of open-ended prompts and time to plan the responses will provide the time it takes to form and communicate hi[illegible]ner-level thoughts (Chuska, 1995). Language and thinking do not exist without each other. Students are constantly being asked to participate in class as a means for the teacher to assess learned knowledge. As a facet of written language, journaling encourages individualized thoughts. Through journaling, students are afforded time to practice their response to the teacher's query of what was learned by doing their

homework. This practice enhances self-confidence and encourages verbal participation in the classroom (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994).

Children become comfortable sharing their ideas with their peers, after they "test the waters" by engaging in a dialogue journal with their teacher (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994).

Some of the benefits of the journaling process include students being active, not passive, in the process of learning. The responsibility for learning is owned by the learner, not the teacher, and there is an increase in student-to-student classroom discussions, as opposed to student-to-teacher discussions. The classroom becomes student-centered (Hughes & Kooy, 1997).

When students become comfortable with the journaling process, they tend to apply, across the curriculum, the self-assessing skills they have learned (Golub & Reid, 1999). Not only is journaling valuable for recording thoughts and developing insights, but this process also stimulates conversations with oneself or others. This process may also help students become more organized in their schoolwork. The journaling process helps people trust their own thoughts, thus increasing self-confidence (Hiemstra, 2001). Through the process of journaling, students begin to acquire a better sense of ownership of their work; they tend to become more critical of what has been learned and the degree to which it has been learned. This critical analysis suggests that the students will become more accomplished, self-assured learners, and more willing to share their knowledge in the classroom (Golub & Reid, 1999). Using journals aids students in personal growth, synthesis, and reflection on new information (Hiemstra, 2001). Journals are also an

excellent vehicle to encourage students to practice metacognition, examining and reflecting on their own learning and thinking processes (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994).

Teachers have become aware that students with higher self-esteem learn better. Journaling can play an important part in developing a student's self-esteem and raise one's ability to act appropriately in social settings such as classroom discussions (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994). Dialogue journals are most beneficial to the student, but teachers can use them to become more aware of students' strengths and weaknesses in terms of thinking and learning. This awareness allows the teacher to coach the reluctant classroom participant through dialogue, responding with encouragement and suggestions (Draper & McIntosh, 2001). When journaling is used, the classroom becomes more student-centered. Students begin to generate more questions and more ideas, and tend to become more active as a guide in the direction of their own learning (Brodine & Isaacs, 1994).

During the course of integrating journaling into a curriculum, it has been realized that the act of writing serves to more fully develop students' cognitive and intellectual skills (Goma, 2001). Through writing, students begin to develop a better sense of their own writing voice and become comfortable with this mode of communication to validate their ideas. Their writing becomes more in touch with who they are (Goma, 2001).

In terms of self-realization, writing can help students become more in touch with the suppressed resources of their minds and bodies. It can awaken thoughts, ideas, and personality patterns that can enhance the quality of students' social involvement (Szumanski, 2001).

When students engage in journal writing, they begin to get in touch with themselves, find out what is really going on in their minds, and begin to listen to

themselves. It can also become a supportive part of a student's psyche, almost as though they have a personal friend who, through writing, extends approval for some of their innermost thoughts (Szumanski, 2001).

In mathematics, keeping a learning log, or journal, seems to support the theory that students can become more prepared to share their ideas in the classroom by becoming more skilled at focusing more accurately on the mathematical processes being learned. Journaling in the classroom several times a week encourages the students to think about, and communicate with peers, ideas relating to mathematics (McIntosh, Draper, 2001). In the mathematics classroom, dialogue journaling encourages the students to begin thinking in mathematical terms, thus becoming prepared to discuss the same (Meel, 1999).

Student journaling is an excellent method of increasing the depth of student comprehension (Barlow, 1999). Through this process, students become aware of where they are struggling in their coursework. They can often talk themselves through the problem spots simply by revealing in writing where they believe the trouble lies. With teacher encouragement in a dialogue journal, this topic could very well be discussed openly in class the next day, especially if others seem to be having the same difficulties (Swartzendruber-Putnam, 2000).

Journaling helps students broaden their thinking and gives them a way to make sense of a problem they are having while learning. The students keep track of their thinking through writing, especially when some of the ideas they are learning are very involved (Burns & Sibey, 2001).

Students struggle when they are trying to learn something new. They become frustrated. Journaling will enable students to reflect upon how they are feeling at any given time during the course of their learning. Realizing that they usually do break through the frustration barrier can be very consoling to students when faced with challenging situations in the classroom (Boud, 2001). Journaling helps students think about topics in a way they may have never done before. At any ability level, students have opinions about what they read or have to do in school. Journals give students who might otherwise not participate the opportunity to voice those opinions and engage in classroom discussions (Bardine, 1995).

Regardless of the type of reflective journaling used in the classroom, working through the journaling process after a homework assignment is completed, or a difficult learning experience is completed, gives the student a richer appreciation of the thinking process and the content. This appreciation provides the student with the confidence needed to share information in class (Golub, Reid, 1999). Given the current trend in computer chat rooms, students are very comfortable dialoguing with people through writing. Allowing students to journal with their teacher through e-mail extends the comfort of a known medium of some students, and may foster a more enthusiastic response (Meel, 1999).

Through journaling, lifelong communication skills may develop. By journaling, students may learn to be more self-confident about their thoughts. When they are certain their peers will not reject their thoughts, or they can anticipate the type of rejection, if any, they tend to become more conversant within the classroom setting. When children learn to confidently express themselves orally, they tend to develop more socially, thus

aiding them in the making of new friends, doing well in school, find a job, and perhaps marry (Sears & Sears, 2002).

Project Objectives and Process

The following desired objective reflects suggestions found in the professional literature and analysis of the data collected regarding the target group.

As a result of journaling, during September 2002 to January 2003, the targeted classes of sixth- through ninth-grade students will increase appropriate oral communication in the classroom, as measured by teacher observation checklist, ongoing teacher journal, and student survey.

To accomplish the desired objective, the following process is necessary:

1. Determine students' comfort with orally communicating in class.
2. Develop a journaling style sheet/template. (Appendices E, F, G, H)
3. Introduce the process of journaling.
4. Practice the process of journaling.
5. Develop a journaling rotation period for collection of journals.

Project Action Plan

During the duration of the research intervention, three teachers from sixth through ninth grade from three schools will implement this action plan. All three teachers were involved in the design of the action research project. All the teachers will participate in the procedures described herein.

I. Pre-intervention (three weeks)

   A. Parent consent (Appendix A)

   B. Evidence of problem

      1. Teacher survey (Appendix D)

      2. Student survey (Appendix B)

3. Teacher journaling (daily)

II. Intervention

A. Teach strategies for journaling (one week)

1. Define journaling

2. Show samples of journal

a. 6th-grade sample (Appendices E, J, K, L, M, and N)

b. 8th-grade sample (Appendix F)

c. 9th-grade sample (Appendices G, and H)

d. Generic template (Appendix I)

1. Reaction to week's class

2. Higher-order thinking question

3. Free-form reflection

B. Students practice journaling (combined with section A – one week)

C. Begin the journaling process in the classroom (14 weeks)

1. Collect journals weekly

2. Dialogue with students through their journals

3. Return journals to students

III. Post-interventions

A. Student survey (Appendix B)

B. Narrative of teacher journal findings

Methods of Assessment

To assess the effects of journaling on communication, student post-surveys will be given. In addition, the teachers' journals will be evaluated to determine if oral communication in the classroom has increased.

The three teachers involved will meet weekly during the intervention period to assess the progress of the intervention plan.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to measure the effect of journaling on oral communication in the classroom. The intervention would engage the class in a dialogue journaling process to increase the comfort level of quieter students so that they would begin to participate more in class discussions or ask more questions when confused during instruction. Students were to reflect in their journals on their weekly accomplishments and struggles. The journals were collected and the teachers responded with suggestions and prompts to encourage the students to share their ideas, when appropriate, with the class.

Before the journaling process could begin, students needed to be taught about journaling, and how it would be handled. The element of trust was a major consideration. Students were told that their reflections were to show how they truly felt about their work for any given week. To ensure that trust was respected, teachers at all levels presented the students with a month of weekly exercises to become familiar with the reflection process. These reflections were returned with responses from the teachers. Students were trained to set up their journal entries by using an overall format (Appendix H). Depending on their grade level, separate samples and/or templates were used for practice (Appendix E, F, and G).

After the initial training period, Site A students were given a hardcover composition notebook. The teacher had decorated one to encourage the students to personalize their journals. Most of the students responded well, making some attempt to style their journals to show who they were and what they enjoyed doing.

Additional training was given at Site A so that a technology component could be added. A Web site was developed in order that the students could access journaling forms (Appendices I, J, K, L, and M) online and email or print out their entries.

Originally, students were required to adhere to the rigid outline of our journaling format. It was noted, however, that in some cases students were not skilled enough writers to understand that detailed descriptions were necessary to communicate the issues. After the eight-week midway point, it was decided that students would be able to address both subject area and personal issues. In addition, students at Site A were required to write at least 10 sentences to encourage them to provide more detailed explanations of issues, concerns, and other events in their lives. This allowed the teacher at Site A to more accurately address the same.

Also at Site A, students were no longer required to follow the online journaling templates (Appendices I, J, K, L, and M). Instead, they could journal via standard text and HTML formats, depending on their technical ability levels. This encouraged students to write more casually and delve more deeply into their discussions.

Students at Site B were introduced to the journaling implementation by direct oral instruction and hands-on practice writing on the generic writing template, which described the necessary components they were to include (Appendix H). Because Site B's school improvement plan was to strengthen students' abilities to write power

paragraphs, students were instructed to write at least a five sentence-paragraph under the journal headings of Summary and Reaction. Students were instructed to ask at least two questions under the Question heading. Students completed a journal entry at the end of each week to recap all that was learned.

Students at Site C were given sample journal entries showing the expected quality and depth of information. Students were given the journal templates on Mondays and were required to submit them on Fridays.

All three site teachers collected the journals and wrote responses on each. The students were not assessed on writing style or grammar, but on thoughtfulness and quality of work.

In addition to the students journaling once a week, the teachers would model journaling as well. Students were told that for the journaling process to work correctly, the teacher would also need to reflect on how the students were doing with the project. The students seemed pleased that the teacher was engaged in the same process. Students were assured that their journals would not be corrected, but a weekly check-in grade would be assigned to each.

Presentation of Analysis of Results

In Figure 20, question 1, data suggest that there is a greater tendency for 6^{th}-grade students (Site A) who were sure of their answers to volunteer during class than in the pre-survey. Those who always participated orally in class increased to 19% from 8%. Also, there was an increase to 37% from 10% of those who sometimes participated orally. However, there was also an increase of 14% in those who never participated orally in class.

In Figures 20, question 7, there was a decrease of 4% of those who sometimes felt shy in the classroom, and a 12% decrease of those who often felt shy in the classroom.

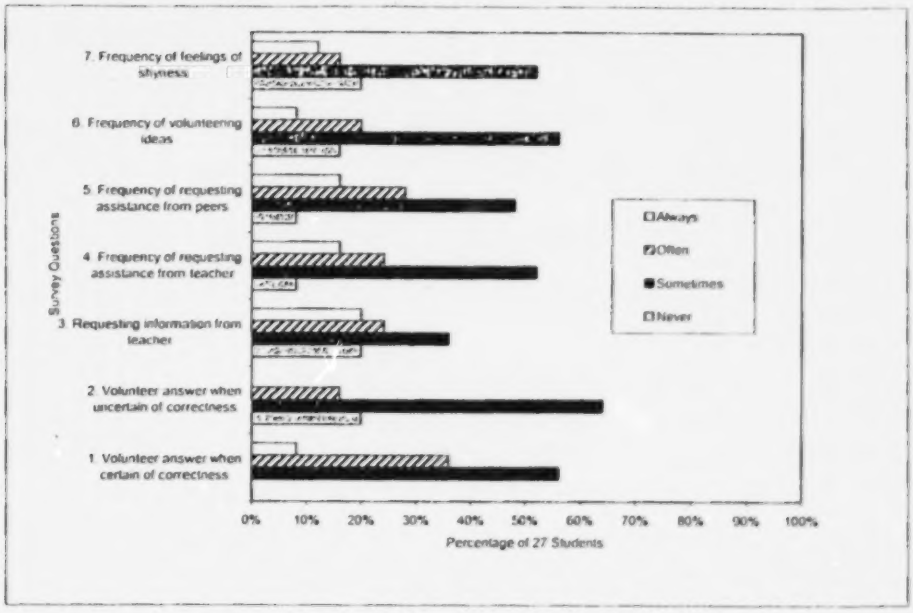

Figure 19. Pre-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 6th Grade Students

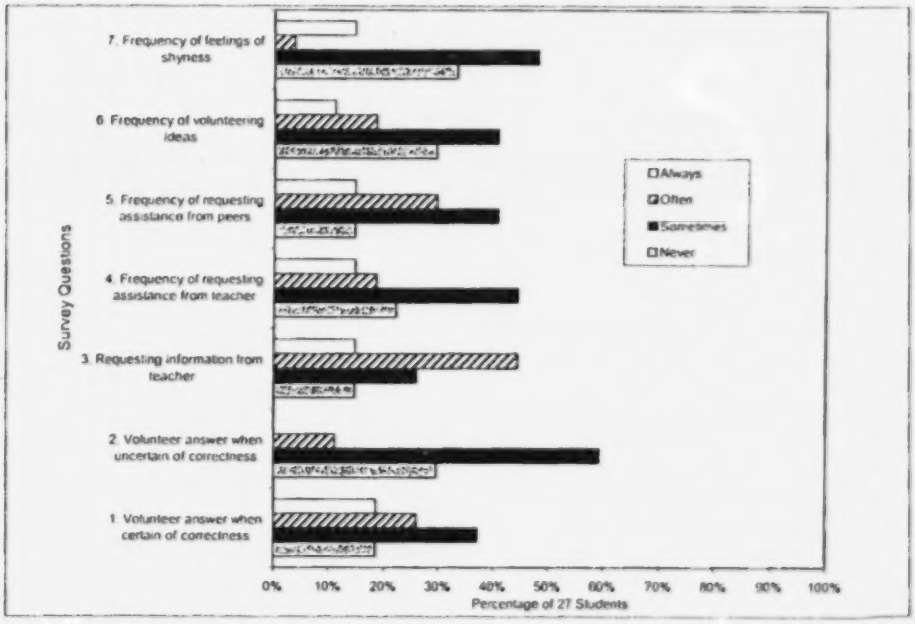

Figure 20. Post-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 6th Grade Students

In Figures 21 and 22, questions 1 and 2, there was a 25% increase in those volunteering answers, regardless of whether the students were certain of the answer. The frequency of 8th-grade (Site B) students requesting assistance from peers (question 5) increased by 17%, which would suggest a reason for the 17% decrease in student assistance from teacher as seen in question 4.

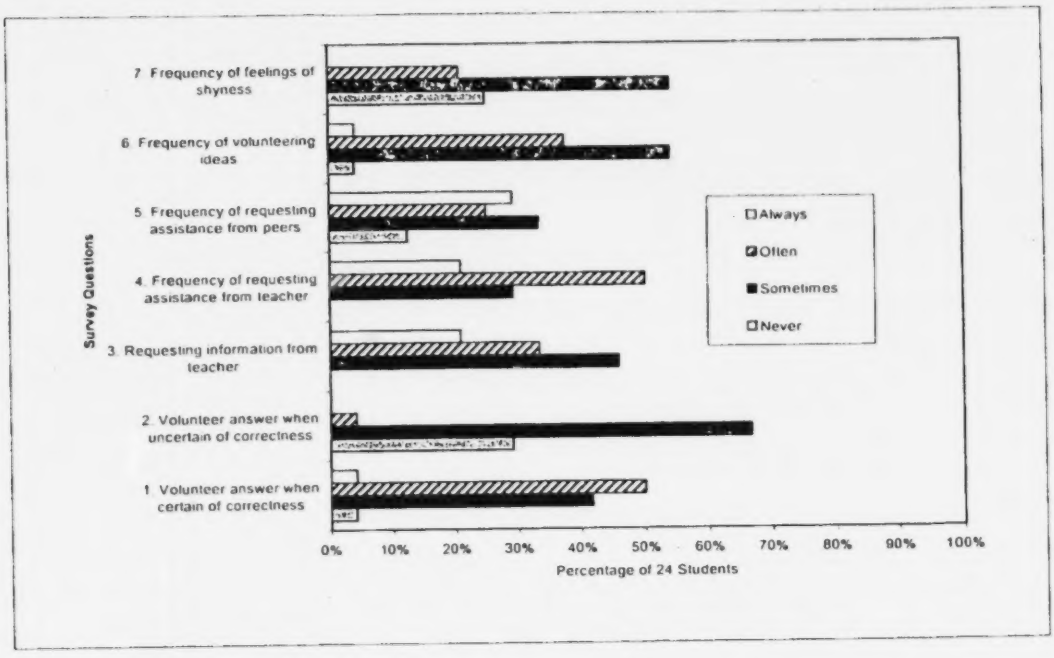

Figure 21. Pre-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 8th Grade Students

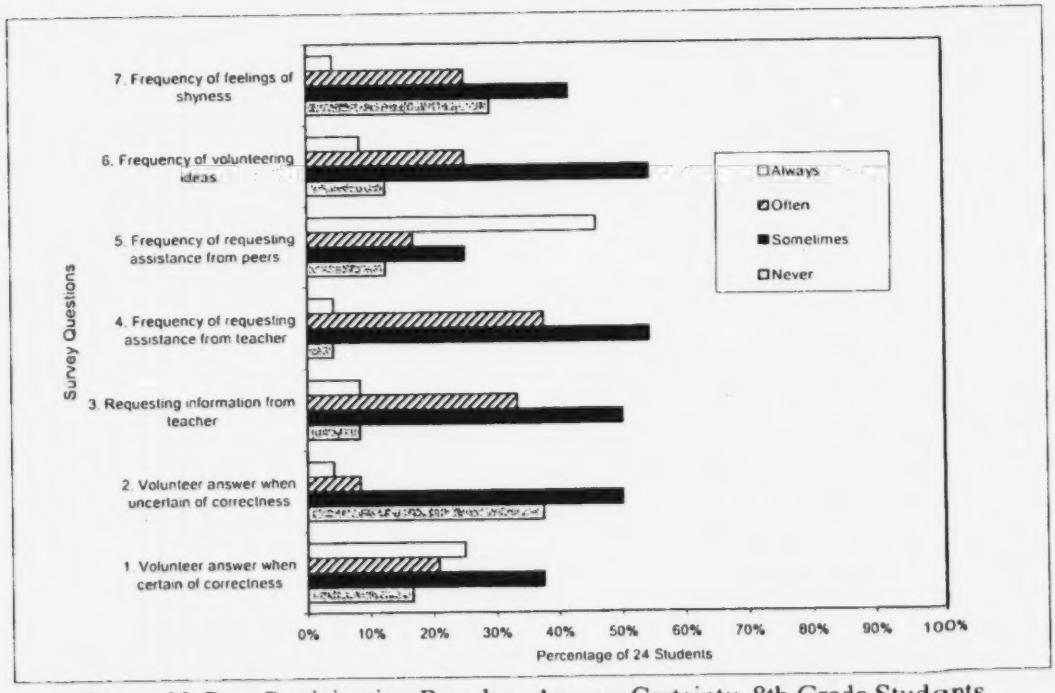

Figure 22. Post-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 8th Grade Students

In Figures 23 and 24, question 1 asked if students volunteer answers if they are sure their answer is correct. The pre-survey showed that 9th-grade (Site C) students answered always or often approximately 60% of the time, and the post-survey showed that this percentage increased by approximately 15%. Question 3 asked how often students requested information from the teacher. The percentage of students answering always or often increased by nearly 15% from pre- to post-survey.

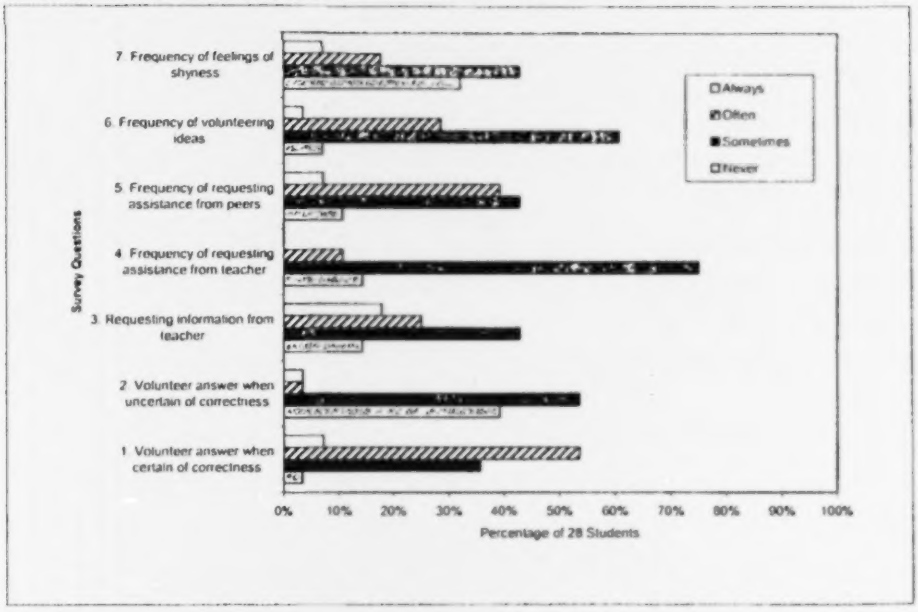

Figure 23. Pre-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 9th Grade Students

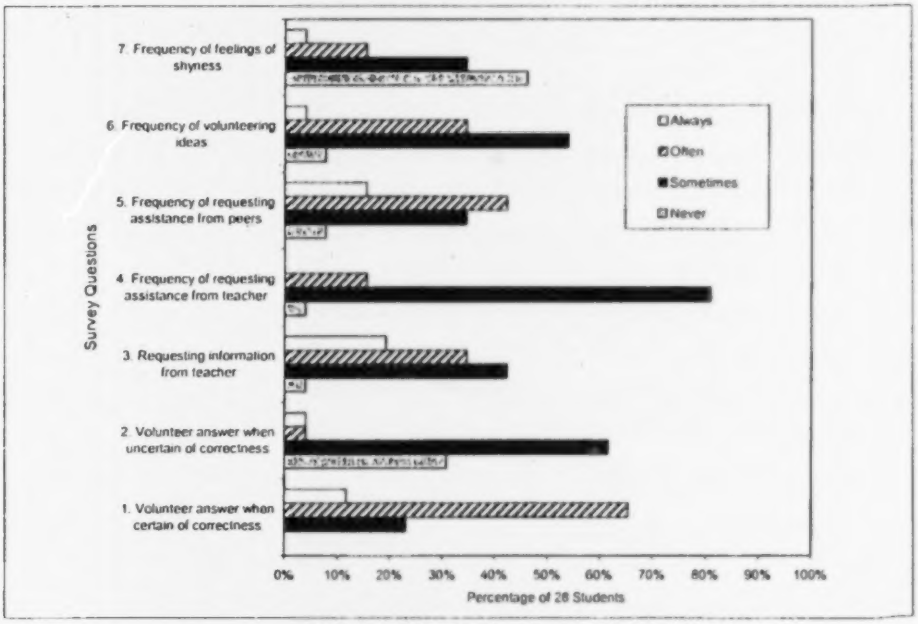

Figure 24. Post-Participation Based on Answer Certainty, 9th Grade Students

In Figure 26, question 9, there was an increase of 24% in the Site A students who never felt fear answering, even if they were disagreeing with the teacher in a classroom setting. Also in Figure 26, questions 19 and 20, there was a 24% increase in the level of how often students felt comfortable sometimes disagreeing with a teacher or classmate in a class discussion, and a 37% increase in the level of how often students felt comfortable always disagreeing with a teacher or classmate in a class discussion.

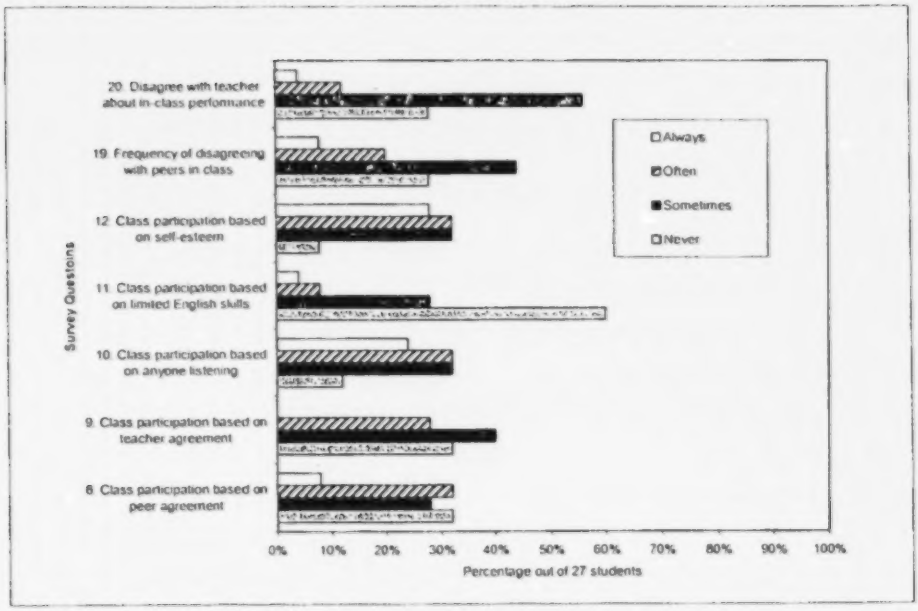

Figure 25. Pre-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 6th Grade Students

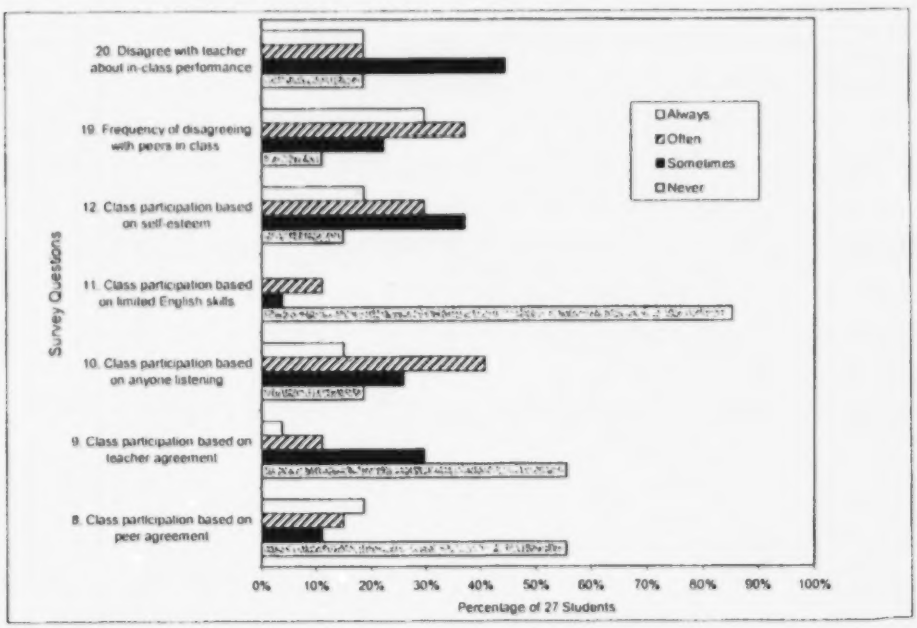

Figure 26. Post-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 6th Grade Students

In Figure 27, question 8, there was an 8% increase in Site B students' class participation based on whether they agreed with their peers. The frequency of students disagreeing with the teacher about in-class performance, question 20, increased by 12%.

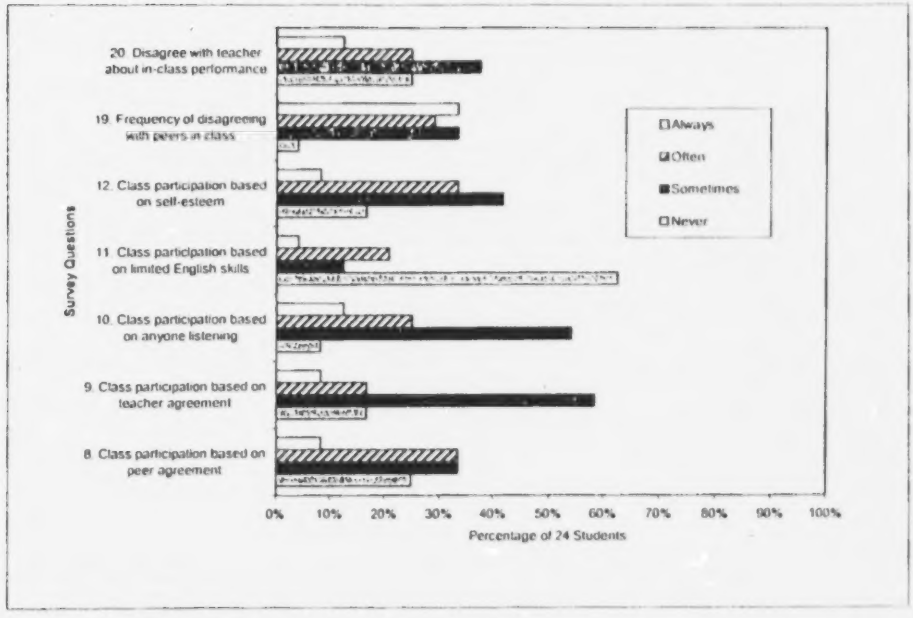

Figure 27. Pre-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 8th Grade Students

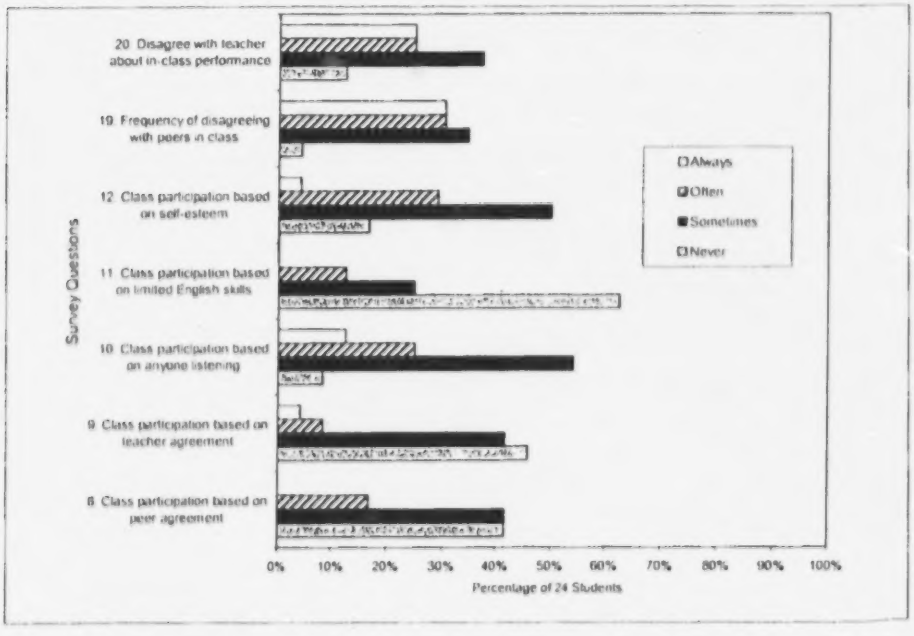

Figure 28. Post-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 8th Grade Students

In Figures 29 and 30, question 9 asked if students participated in class if they thought the teacher agreed with what they had to say. The pre-survey showed that approximately 15% of the Site C students answered always or often. This number decreased to 5% on the post-survey. Question 10 asked if students participated in class if their peers were listening and question 12 asked if students participated in class on the basis of their self-esteem. The percentage of students answering always or often in both of these questions decreased by nearly 10% from the pre to post-survey.

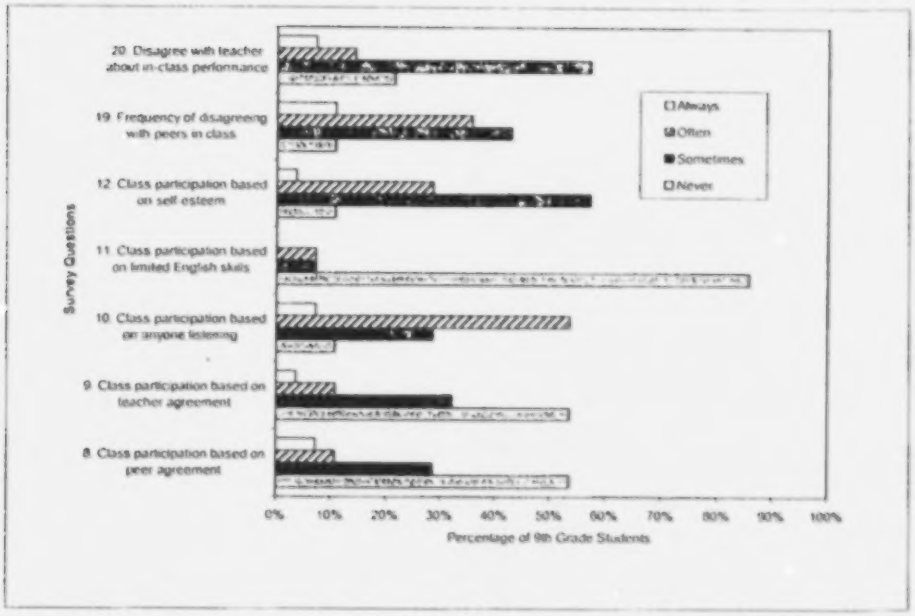

Figure 29. Pre-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 9th Grade Students

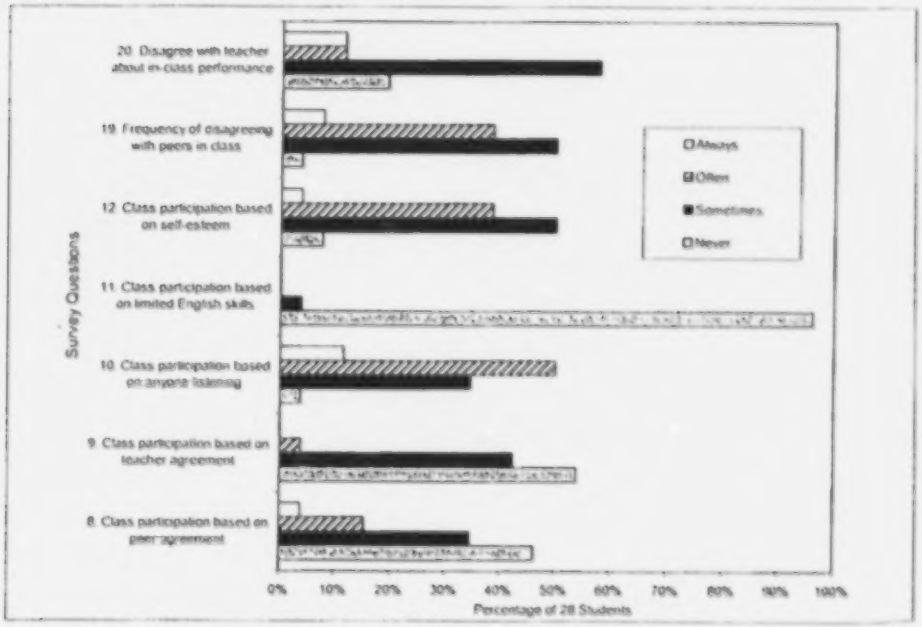

Figure 30. Post-Participation Based on Peer Pressure/Self-Esteem, 9th Grade Students

In Figure 31, question 14, there was a 20% increase in Site A students who always had opportunity to meet and work with students on a project outside of the classroom. In questions 16 and 17, there was a 19% increase of how often students felt comfortable discussing projects with peers and adults outside of the classroom. In question 18, there was a 24% increase in students who went home to homes where there was no parent present.

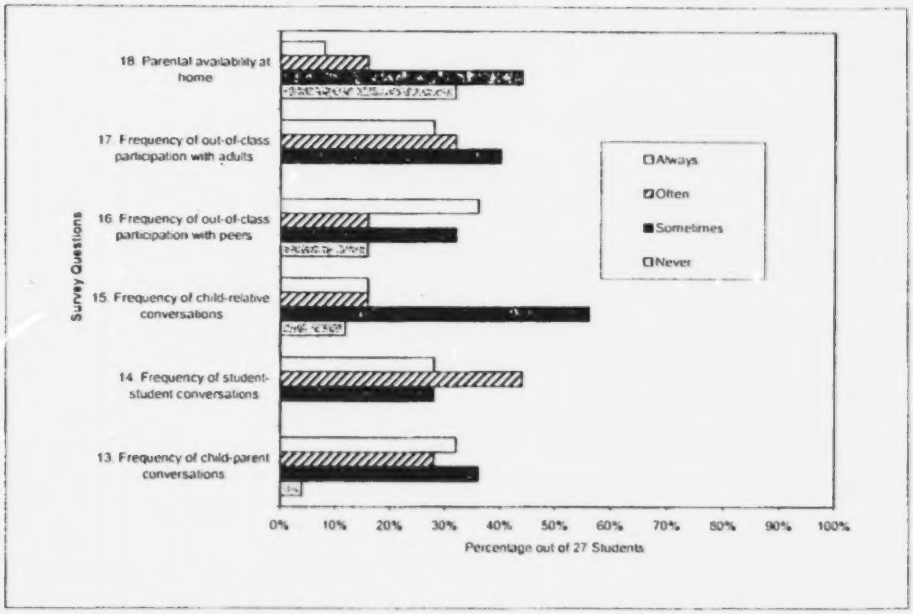

Figure 31. Pre-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 6th Grade Students

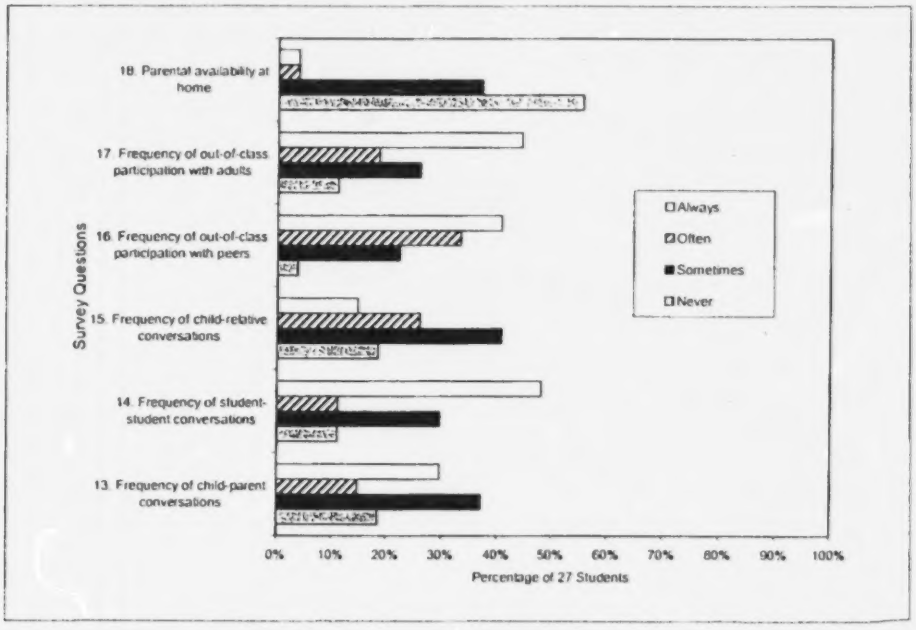

Figure 32. Post-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 6th Grade Students

In Figure 33, question 16, there was a 12% increase in frequency of out-of-class participation with peers. The data in question 14 show a 12% decrease in Site B student-to-student conversation.

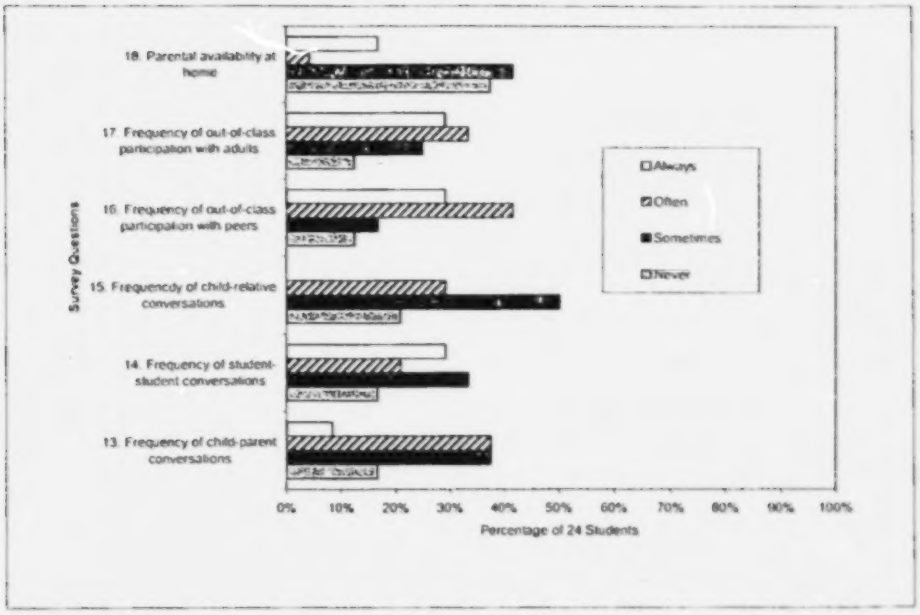

Figure 33. Pre-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 8th Grade Students

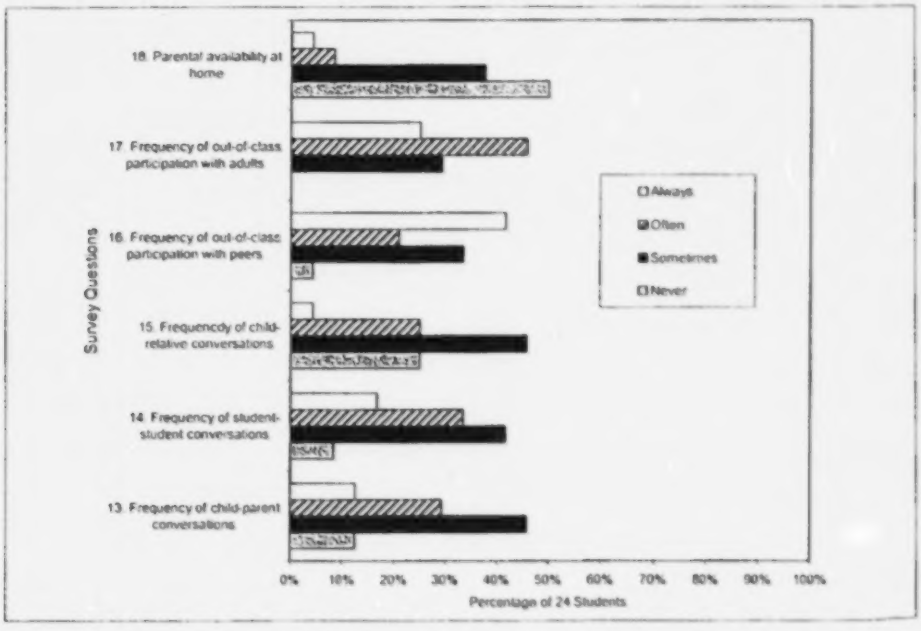

Figure 34. Post-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 8th Grade Students

In Figures 35 and 36, questions 13-18 focused on oral communication outside the classroom of Site C students. The data did not appear to change from pre to post-survey. This suggests that journaling does not have an effect on how students communicate orally outside of the classroom.

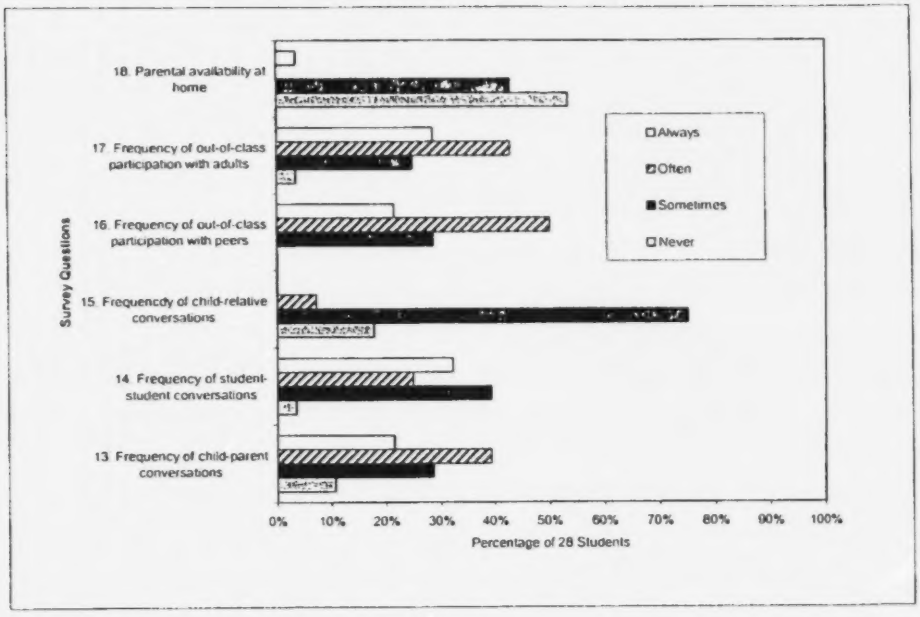

Figure 35. Pre-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 9th Grade Students

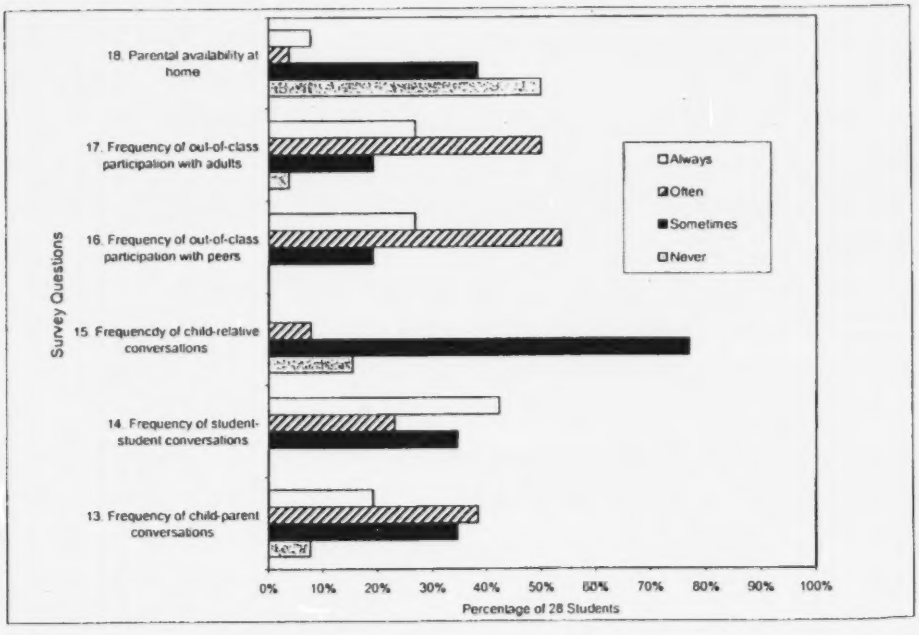

Figure 36. Post-Oral Communication Outside the Classroom, 9th Grade Students

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the student post-surveys, journaling seems to have had only minor effects on increasing oral communication in the classroom. On the basis of teachers' qualitative findings, the intervention seems to have strengthened teacher-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-adult communication.

Trust appears to be greater between teacher and student, and the researchers find that students are conversing more with other students during class about their opinions. Students' writing ability seems to have improved over the course of 16 weeks. It was also noted that students wrote with more freedom and insight in the later weeks than in the earlier weeks. In the three areas about which students were instructed to write, teachers believed that students' summaries, questions, and reactions were more in-depth than before the implementation and stronger statements were made by students, which we feel increased their self-esteem and overall communication.

It should be noted that in Site A, there was a large increase on the students' part to work together outside of the classroom. The researchers believed that this was not so much from the effects of journaling, but because of all the long-range, cooperative grouping projects that the students were required to complete.

The next important finding is that the students have all gained strength in reflecting about how a lesson affected or influenced them. The researchers were hoping that this comfort level would increase students' oral communication but it did not; however, it did increase the depth of their thoughts, as evidenced in their journals.

One of the pitfalls of the intervention was not including oral activities in class through which students would have the opportunity to practice their oral communication

skills. The researchers should not have assumed that improved thinking and writing would naturally result in improved oral communication. In math, it is important for the students to use proper terminology to communicate their point. Correct vocabulary should be stressed.

Students need to practice higher-order questioning and thinking in their writing. More time should be spent with samples so that students become more familiar with the steps in learning what higher-order thinking requires. In addition to the generic form, more specific questions should be asked as a means for students to make connections between classroom lessons and related topics.

After 16 weeks, the students became stronger in journaling with their teachers. The researchers believe that a longer intervention period, during which oral communication techniques could have been taught, would have yielded a more significant impact on students' oral communication in the classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Parent Letter

Mr. Mark Rougeux
Scott School
2250 N. Scott Street
Melrose Park, IL 60164
847-455-4818

August 2002

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As part of the requirements for my master's degree from St. Xavier University, I am conducting research that involves the use of journaling in the classroom to help students to better express themselves. Research is showing that students who journal with their teacher on a regular basis, begin to become more comfortable with oral class participation. My students will be learning about the use of journaling to help them become more comfortable with communicating in the classroom setting.

This project will take place over a sixteen-week period of time. During that time, there will be weekly opportunities for your child to journal with me, and I will have a chance to respond to that journal.

Student participation in this project is voluntary, and will not interfere with the day-to-day educational program. Your child's privacy will be respected throughout the project. Names are not reported and no information will be released to unauthorized personnel. There is no cost or compensation for participating in this project.

I am very excited about this project and hope that my students will become better communicators as a result of it. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Mr. Mark Rougeux

Appendix B
Pre- and Post-Student Survey

Student Communication Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out how comfortable you are when speaking to various audiences. Please, answer honestly by circling one number for each answer. **Do not put your name on this paper!**

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. How often do you volunteer to answer questions in class if you are sure of the answer?	1	2	3	4
2. How often do you volunteer to answer questions in class if you are unsure of the answer?	1	2	3	4
3. Do you feel comfortable asking a teacher to clarify information during class?	1	2	3	4
4. How often do you ask for help from a teacher during class?	1	2	3	4
5. How often do you ask for help from a classmate during class?	1	2	3	4
6. How often do you contribute your ideas in a class discussion?	1	2	3	4
7. When you are in a classroom, how often do you feel shy?	1	2	3	4
8. How often do you feel afraid to answer in class because you may disagree with your friends?	1	2	3	4
9. How often do you feel afraid to answer in class because you may disagree with your teacher?	1	2	3	4
10. How often do you contribute to class discussions no matter who is listening?	1	2	3	4
11. How often do you feel that your English skills prevent you from joining class discussions?	1	2	3	4
12. How often do you feel that what you think is valuable to a class discussion?	1	2	3	4
13. How often do you have a chance to sit down and talk with your parents about school and your everyday life?	1	2	3	4
14. How often do you have a chance to get together with classmates outside of school to talk about school and your everyday life?	1	2	3	4
15. How often do you have a chance to get together with relatives to talk about school and your everyday life?	1	2	3	4
16. Do you feel comfortable talking with your classmates about ideas you have about a school project?	1	2	3	4
17. Do you feel comfortable talking with adults about a school project?	1	2	3	4
18. How often do you find that there is no one at home to talk about your day at school, or to answer anything that may be on your mind?	1	2	3	4
19. How often do you feel comfortable with disagreeing with a classmate in a class discussion?	1	2	3	4
20. How often do you feel comfortable with disagreeing with a teacher about something on which you are working in class?	1	2	3	4

Appendix C
(Daily for first and last week of treatment)

Teacher Observation Checklist

Day 1	Tally	Total
Ideas shared		
Questions asked		
Attempted answer		
Elaboration on current topic		
Making personal connections		

Day 2	Tally	Total
Ideas shared		
Questions asked		
Attempted answer		
Elaboration on current topic		
Making personal connections		

Day 3	Tally	Total
Ideas shared		
Questions asked		
Attempted answer		
Elaboration on current topic		
Making personal connections		

Day 4	Tally	Total
Ideas shared		
Questions asked		
Attempted answer		
Elaboration on current topic		
Making personal connections		

Day 5	Tally	Total
Ideas shared		
Questions asked		
Attempted answer		
Elaboration on current topic		
Making personal connections		

Appendix D

Teacher Communication Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out how comfortable you feel your students are when speaking to various audiences. Thanks for your help.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. How often do students volunteer to answer questions in class when they are sure of the answer?	1	2	3	4
2. How often do students volunteer to answer questions in class when they are unsure of the answer?	1	2	3	4
3. How often do students feel comfortable asking questions during instruction?	1	2	3	4
4. When you ask, "Are there any questions," how often are there no questions?	1	2	3	4
5. How often do students ask for help from a classmate during class?	1	2	3	4
6. How often do students contribute their ideas in a class discussion?	1	2	3	4
7. How often do you feel students don't answer because of shyness?	1	2	3	4
8. How often do you feel students are afraid to answer in class because they may disagree with their friends?	1	2	3	4
9. How often do you feel students are afraid to answer in class because they may disagree with the teacher?	1	2	3	4
10. How often do you feel students as a whole are comfortable with engaging in class discussions?	1	2	3	4
11. How often do you feel that students' English skills prevent them from joining class discussions?	1	2	3	4
12. How often do you think students honestly try to contribute meaningfully to class discussions?	1	2	3	4
13. How often do you think students have a chance to sit down and have meaningful conversations with their parents about school and/or everyday life?	1	2	3	4
14. Do you think that most of your students have friends with whom they can have meaningful conversations about school and everyday life?	1	2	3	4
15. How often do you think your students have a chance to get together with relatives to talk about school and everyday life?	1	2	3	4
16. Do your students feel comfortable talking with their classmates about ideas they have about a school project?	1	2	3	4
17. Do your students in general feel comfortable talking with adults about a school project?	1	2	3	4
18. How often do you think that there is no one at home to talk about your students' day at school, or to answer anything that may be on their minds when they arrive home from school?	1	2	3	4
19. How often do you feel your students are comfortable with disagreeing with a classmate in a class discussion?	1	2	3	4
20. How often do you feel your students are comfortable with disagreeing with you about something you are working on in class?	1	2	3	4

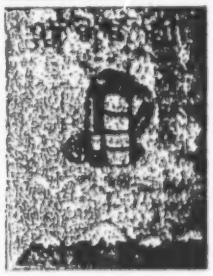
Appendix E
6th-grade blank template

Here is a blank journal form for you to follow when setting up your weekly entries. Feel free to decorate each page to reflect your personality as well as your mood for the week/day.

Date:_____

Event/Subject:_____

My Thoughts: Reflection on problem or success:



Suggestion for a solution if there is a problem, or a suggestion on how stay at this level of success if you are doing well.

What's on your mind? Write anything you like here.

Mr. Rougeux's Thoughts:

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Appendix F
8th-Grade Sample Template

Weekly Art Journal Entry

Title:

Date:

Summary:

Questions:

Reaction:

Miss Grbavac's Comments:

Appendix G
9th-Grade Sample Template

This is an example of a journal entry that will be used to show what is expected of the students in their own journal writing.

Title: Solving systems of equations

Date: 9/18/02

Summary: This week we learned how to solve a system of equations using three different techniques. The techniques used to solve a system are graphing, substitution, and linear combinations. We also talked about when each technique should be used. In class we also learned that to check our solutions we had to substitute our answers back in to both of the equations in the system.

Question: I am still a little confused on when to use what technique. I don't know why I can't just graph all of them on my calculator and find the point of intersection. Is that okay to do or do I need to know how to use each one? I'm still confused on how linear combination works. Could you help me with that or give me some more practice?

Reaction: I think that it's important to make sure you check your solutions every time. I've saved myself a few times because when I checked the answer it didn't work and then I figured out my mistake. I am looking forward to doing the linear programming because I want to go into business and that is what I need to know how to do. Being able to maximize the profit and minimize the cost is important to any business. Being able to solve systems of equations will help me to better do linear programming.

Appendix H
9th-Grade Sample Template

This is an example of a journal entry that will be used to show what is expected of the students in their own journal writing.

Title: Medians, altitudes, perpendicular bisectors, and angle bisectors of triangles.

Date: 9/18/02

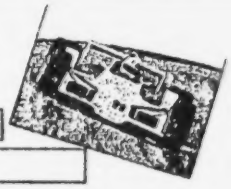
Summary: This week we learned the definitions of median, altitude, perpendicular bisector, and angle bisector of a triangle. We also learned how to construct each one using a compass and straightedge. We worked with partners and constructed the bisectors, medians, and altitudes of all different types of triangles. At the end of the week we got to choose which construction was our best and then enlarge it and make it into a poster to put up in the room.

Question: I don't have any questions, but I think that the lesson could have been improved if we had more time to do the constructions. I felt rushed to get them done and I think I could have done a better job if I had more time.

Reaction: I really enjoyed doing the constructions because they really helped me to understand what each definition meant. If I would have just read the definition and not actually constructed it then I would have been totally lost. I also liked how you let us try to see if there were other shapes that have bisectors and medians and altitudes. I think that when we get to these topics I can prove to you that there are some similarities. I like Geometry because it is visual and that's how I learn the best.

Appendix I

6th-Grade Online Journal Template



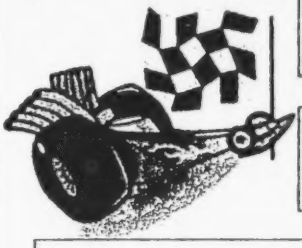
Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/29/2002

Your name goes in here.

The subject of today's journal entry goes in here.

What class or activity do you want to write about today?

What's on your mind today?



Suggest a solution to the problem, or a way to share your good feelings.

Here is a space for you to write about anything you want!

Thoughts from Mr. Rougeux

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Appendix J

6th-Grade Online Journal Template

Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/29/2002

Your name goes in here.

The subject of today's journal entry goes in here.

What class or activity do you want to write about today?

What's on your mind today?

Suggest a solution to the problem, or a way to share your good feelings.

Here is a space for you to write about anything you want!

Thoughts from Mr. Rougeux

Appendix K
6th-Grade Online Journal Template

Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/29/2002

Your name goes in here.

The subject of today's journal entry goes in here.

What class or activity do you want to write about today?

GARFIELD

What's on your mind today?

Suggest a solution to the problem, or a way to share your good feelings.

Here is a space for you to write about anything you want!

Thoughts from Mr. Rougeux

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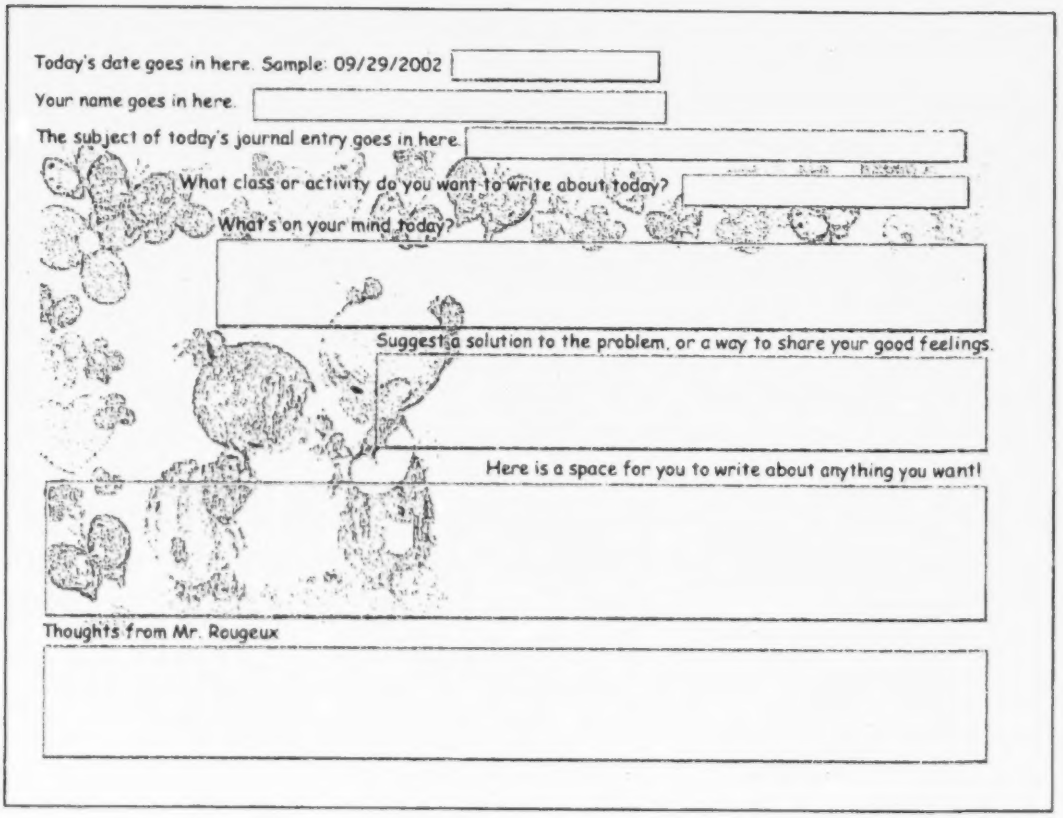
Appendix L

6th-Grade Online Journal Template


Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/29/2002
Your name goes in here.
The subject of today's journal entry goes in here.
What class or activity do you want to write about today?
What's on your mind today?
Suggest a solution to the problem, or a way to share your good feelings.
Here is a space for you to write about anything you want!
Thoughts from Mr. Rougeux

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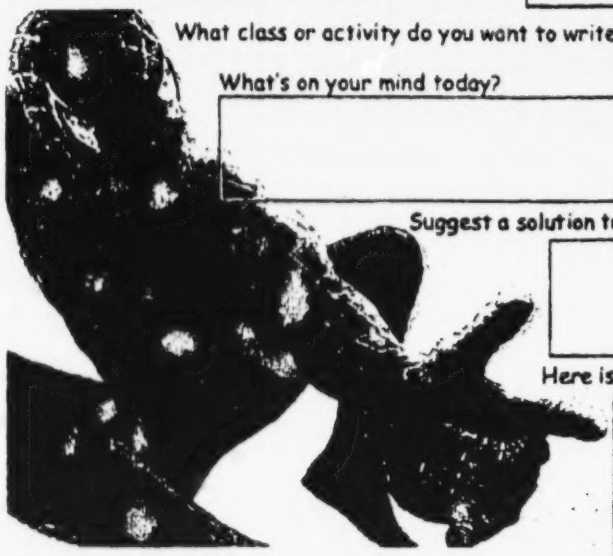
Appendix M
6th-Grade Online Journal Template

Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/29/2002

Your name goes in here.

The subject of today's journal entry goes in here.



What class or activity do you want to write about today?

What's on your mind today?

Suggest a solution to the problem, or a way to share your good feelings.

Here is a space for you to write about anything you want!

Thoughts from Mr. Rougeux

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Appendix N
6th-Grade Online Journal Template
Sample

Today's date goes in here. Sample: 09/20/2002 09/29/2002

Your name goes in here. David McMillan

The subject of today's journal entry goes in here. I think I get it!

I didn't want to say anything in class today because you know how shy I am, but I think I am starting to understand the reading you are teaching. You know, about Making Connections. When I read, sometimes what I read reminds me of something else that I read, or that happened to me in my life. That helps me understand what is going on in the story, or how the characters are feeling.

Thanks, Mr. Rougeux!

Here are my thoughts.

Way to go!!! Making connections can really help when you are reading. I'm glad that this strategy is helping you when you read. Just think how much easier it will be the next time you read something. This is something the rest of the class would enjoy hearing about. Why don't you share it?

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